

# THE SECRET VEGAS LIFE OF AN OLYMPIAN

P. 56

EXCLUSIVE BOOK EXCERPT | BY SUZY FAVOR HAMILTON

# Sports Illustrated

SI.COM | SEPTEMBER 14, 2015 | @SINOW

**SPECIAL REPORT**

## ELATEGATE

**...AND THE NFL'S  
COMMISSIONER CRISIS**

BY S.L. PRICE

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**WHY SUSPICIONS  
STILL RUN DEEP  
ABOUT THE PATS**

BY GREG BISHOP,  
MICHAEL ROSENBERG  
AND THAYER EVANS

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### COLLEGE FOOTBALL

## 46 LAQUON TREADWELL

Returning from a gruesome injury, the Ole Miss receiver is leaner, faster and burning to win

By Andy Staples

Photograph by  
Pouya Dianat  
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### SI HAS REGIONAL COVERS THIS WEEK:

Illustration by Wm J. Hennessy Jr. CourtroomArt.com for Sports Illustrated (Patriots); Donald Miralle for Sports Illustrated (Kessler)

# Sports Illustrated



# SI NOW

WITH HOST  
**MAGGIE GRAY**



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*"If my past didn't happen the way it did, I wouldn't be enjoying the present."*

**—Bo Jackson**

It's a little different for someone to say that or ask that if they haven't walked in the shoes of a professional athlete. But if my past didn't happen the way it did, I wouldn't be enjoying the present.

**MG:** What sport do you find yourself watching the most today?

**BJ:** Golf.

**MG:** Golf? Not football or baseball or any of the sports that you played?

**BJ:** No, none of the sports I played because I know how to do those sports already. I'm trying to learn a new trade.

**MG:** So what's your handicap?

**BJ:** As of about three or four years ago my handicap was 4.3. But it has moved up to the lower double digits. I would say maybe a 10 or 11 now.

For more of Jackson's interview, plus the SI Now archive, go to [SI.com/sinow](http://SI.com/sinow)

**BO JACKSON** The 1985 Heisman Trophy-winning running back, who played four seasons for the Raiders and eight seasons in MLB, gives advice to Robert Griffin III and reveals the next sport he's trying to master

**MAGGIE GRAY:** When you're a Heisman Trophy winner like yourself and RG3 and you walk into a professional locker room for the first time, what are the challenges that come with that?

**BO JACKSON:** There aren't any major ones. You really just have to continue to do the things that got you to that locker room in the first place. That's all. You really shouldn't

feel like you have to prove yourself. Just by making it there you've already done enough to impress someone and have them have faith in you. You just have to stay humble, fit in and let everything else take care of itself on the field. **MG:** If you had to do it all over again, would you have played just one sport?

**BJ:** I would not change a thing. Not a thing.

## TUNE IN



**EPISODE: AUG. 31**

Two-time Australian Open champion **Victoria Azarenka** explains what it's like to face Serena Williams



**EPISODE: SEPT. 1**

SPORTS ILLUSTRATED staff writer **Albert Chen** analyzes the Nationals' disappointing season



**EPISODE: SEPT. 2**

Do the Packers have enough depth to overcome wideout **Jordy Nelson's** season-ending knee injury?



**EPISODE: SEPT. 3**

Cardinals coaching intern **Jen Welter** gives advice to women who want to coach football

SI NOW POWERED BY



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STEPHEN WADE/GETTY IMAGES (JACKSON); MATTHEW STOCKMAN/GETTY IMAGES (AZARENKA); ANDREW HARNIK/AP (NATIONALS); ROBERT BECK FOR SPORTS ILLUSTRATED (NELSON); CHRISTIAN PETERSEN/GETTY IMAGES (WELTER)





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# INBOX

FOR AUG. 31, 2015



The picture of **Usain Bolt's** 100-meter-dash win at the world championships in Beijing was stunning not only because it showed Bolt's amazing feat but also because it captured the mistake made in the final moments by the four Team USA athletes surrounding him. Each seems to be glancing over at Bolt, including Justin Gatlin, who took second place, instead of keeping his sight straight ahead on the finish.

John Strotbeck, Philadelphia

While **Serena Williams** has definitely been the most dominant player of her generation, she has had no clear opponents to challenge her consistently. That's why I think comparing her career with Steffi Graf's is a bit off base. Graf had to overcome stiffer competition from the likes of Martina Navratilova, Monica Seles, Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario and Lindsay Davenport. The most consistent players Serena has had to face over the years have been her sister Venus and Maria Sharapova, and they are nowhere near that level.

Esteban R. Lugo, Maple Grove, Minn.



COVER

The excitement of the **Cubs'** season was wonderfully conveyed by your great cover. However, I was dismayed to see that the article was yet another lament from a disappointed Cubs fan.

James Snowden  
Quincy, Ill.

Rich Cohen wrote that former Cubs manager Lee Elia was fired "10 seconds" after his rant against heckling fans in April 1983. However, Elia remained with the team as manager until Aug. 22 that season.

Matt Bartel  
Dudley, Mass.



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In his article on Hurricane Katrina, Tim Layden mentions that **Drew Brees's** time with the Saints has been the longest QB tenure with one team other than those of Tom Brady and Eli Manning. Did he forget about Ben Roethlisberger and Philip Rivers, who were both in the same 2004 draft as Manning?

Carl Naimoli  
Aston, Pa.

CONTACT  
SPORTS ILLUSTRATED

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A full-page advertisement for Nautica. A man with brown hair and a light beard is the central figure. He is wearing a dark navy blue jacket over a white collared shirt and a dark tie. Underneath the jacket is a thick, blue and white cable-knit sweater. He is also wearing dark blue jeans and a brown leather belt. He stands on a paved promenade with a green metal railing. In the background, there is a body of water and a hazy coastline under a cloudy sky. The Nautica logo is at the bottom, and the website URL is on the left.

# NAUTICA









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1  
of  
3

## Leading Off

# Fit to Be Tide

■ No. 3 Alabama charged onto the field at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, for the marquee game of college football's opening weekend, a Saturday-night matchup with 20th-ranked Wisconsin. It took a while for the Crimson Tide's execution to match their zeal—they led just 14-7 at halftime—but touchdown runs of 56 and two yards by 6' 3", 242-pound junior Derrick Henry in the third quarter opened up a 21-point lead. Bama held Badgers rushers to 40 yards on 21 carries and won 35-17.

PHOTOGRAPH BY  
**GREG NELSON**  
FOR SPORTS ILLUSTRATED









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23

**Leading  
Off**

## Last-Mitch Effort

■ With no time remaining, Brigham Young senior wide receiver Mitch Mathews outmaneuvered Nebraska linebacker Luke Gifford (12) and safety Nate Gerry to haul in a 42-yard TD for a 33-28 victory in Lincoln last Saturday. The wobbly strike to Mathews (inset) came from freshman Tanner Mangum, who took over after star QB Taysom Hill broke his right foot. (Hill is out for the season.) Mangum completed 7 of 11 passes for 111 yards.

PHOTOGRAPH BY  
**ERIC FRANCIS**  
GETTY IMAGES

INSET:  
DAVID G. MCINTYRE  
ZUMAPRESS.COM









+

33

**Leading  
Off**

## 41st Time's The Charm

■ Temple junior running back Jahad Thomas soared for a game-high 135 yards last Saturday in Philadelphia, spearheading the biggest upset of the weekend, a 27-10 victory over Penn State before 69,176 at Lincoln Financial Field. The Owls' last win in the series came on Oct. 18, 1941; since then they were 0-39-1. Thomas—who gained all of 384 yards last year—also scored two TDs, the second on a 24-yard, fourth-quarter run that put Temple up 24-10.

PHOTOGRAPH BY  
**MATT SLOCUM**  
AP



Edited by JIM GORANT + TED KEITH

## SCORECARD



## Money Walks

Or does he? Floyd Mayweather Jr. says he's retiring after Saturday's fight, but the lure of a 50-0 mark may be too much for him to resist

BY CHRIS MANNIX

**AND SO** it will end, the decorated, lucrative and oh-so-controversial 19-year career of Floyd Mayweather Jr., on Saturday, at the MGM Grand Garden Arena, against Andre Berto. At least that's what Mayweather would have you believe. While many are convinced that Mayweather actually intends to fight once more after notching his 49th victory, over Berto—a 50th win would eclipse Rocky Marciano's 49-0 mark and would take place in the sparkling new arena the MGM Grand is set to open in the spring of 2016—Mayweather insists his career is over. “I’ve been pushed to the limit,” he says. “There is nothing left to accomplish.”

That's debatable. No question, Mayweather is a first ballot Hall of Famer, a world champion in five weight classes, the pound-for-pound king for the better part of the last decade and one of the best defensive fighters in history. Inside the ring he has been masterful, a calculating hit-and-don't-get-hit artist with pinpoint accuracy. Outside he has been even more successful: “Money” Mayweather, the villainous persona Mayweather adopted after defeating Oscar De La Hoya in May 2007, has generated 14 million pay-per-view buys and nearly a billion dollars in revenue. His boorishness and even his history of violence against women (a rap sheet that includes three domestic-abuse-

related convictions) have not diminished his earning power. He's a WWE-style heel, siphoning cash out of the wallets of fans who tune in hoping to see him lose.

Yet if this is the end, Mayweather's career will be defined less by what was and more by what could have been. His career is divided into two periods: pre- and post-De La Hoya. Before his showdown with De La Hoya (a split-decision victory), Mayweather was inimitable; fast, powerful and ambitious. He stormed out of the 1996 Olympics and immediately established himself as a star. He outclassed the likes of Genaro Hernandez and Diego Corrales, picked

apart Zab Judah and Arturo Gatti. Yet after De La Hoya, Mayweather's priorities shifted. He became more businessman than boxer, more interested in protecting his best marketing tool—his undefeated record—than in taking on the most worthy contenders. All roads lead to Floyd Mayweather, he would sneer, and would-be opponents would accept his terms—or none at all. His unwillingness to face Manny Pacquiao for years was maddening, and though the fight ultimately came off, last May, with Mayweather winning a comfortable decision, fans will always wonder what would have been had the two top fighters of their





generation tangled in their primes. Mayweather's choice of Berto is just the latest example of his taking the path of least resistance; with worthy opponents such as Tim Bradley, Kell Brook and Amir Khan available, Mayweather settled on Berto, a once-upon-a-time welterweight contender who has lost three of his last six fights.

Mayweather's reign has come during a particularly fallow period in boxing history. There are many reasons the sport has been pushed to the fringes—the lack of a dominating American heavyweight, the fractured relationships between promoters—but Mayweather's preeminence has played

a role. His obsession with a perfect record has been emulated by an entire generation of fighters. And the multimillion-dollar payday that comes with facing him has caused some contenders (Khan, for example) to avoid any opponent who might jeopardize their status.

Maybe it's best then that Mayweather walk away. Boxing will go on, with younger stars like Saul Alvarez and Gennady Golovkin poised to take over. The sport thrived in those eras in which excellence was not defined solely by a fighter's record; Sugar Ray Robinson, generally considered the greatest fighter of all time, retired with 19 defeats, while De La Hoya (six), Muhammad Ali (five) and Sugar Ray Leonard (three) all took losses. Competition determined status then, and a return to that approach could spark a badly needed resurgence in boxing.

Perhaps we will appreciate Mayweather more after he is gone. We will remember the blurring speed and the technical brilliance, the brash personality with the skills to back it up. We will be in awe of a fighter who, at 38, walked away while still at the top of his game. We will remember a fighter who was great—but also one who could have been so much greater. □

## GO FIGURE

# 0, 4, 1



THE NUMBER OF AT BATS, RUNS SCORED AND RBIS FOR THE NATIONALS' **BYRCE HARPER** ON SEPT. 3 IN A 15-1 WIN AGAINST THE BRAVES. HARPER, WHO WALKED IN ALL FOUR OF HIS PLATE APPEARANCES, IS THE FIRST PLAYER IN THE MODERN ERA TO SCORE FOUR RUNS AND DRIVE IN A RUN WITHOUT RECORDING AN AT BAT.



# 3

Goals for **Didier Drogba** of the Montreal Impact last Saturday in a 4-3 win over Chicago. The 37-year-old Drogba, a longtime Chelsea star, is the oldest player with an MLS hat trick, and he did it in his first start in the league.

# 151

Consecutive wins for **Rafael Nadal** in Grand Slam matches when leading two sets to none. The streak ended last Friday when he lost to Fabio Fognini 3-6, 4-6, 6-4, 6-3, 6-4 in the third round of the U.S. Open.



# 2

Consecutive missed cuts for **Jordan Spieth**, who won the Masters and U.S. Open earlier this season. Spieth shot 75-73 to miss the cut at the Deutsche Bank Championship last weekend in Norton, Mass., one week after shooting 74-73 to miss the cut at The Barclays in Edison, N.J.





## + COLLEGE FOOTBALL

# Student Body Left

*Sis boom... ah, forget about it*

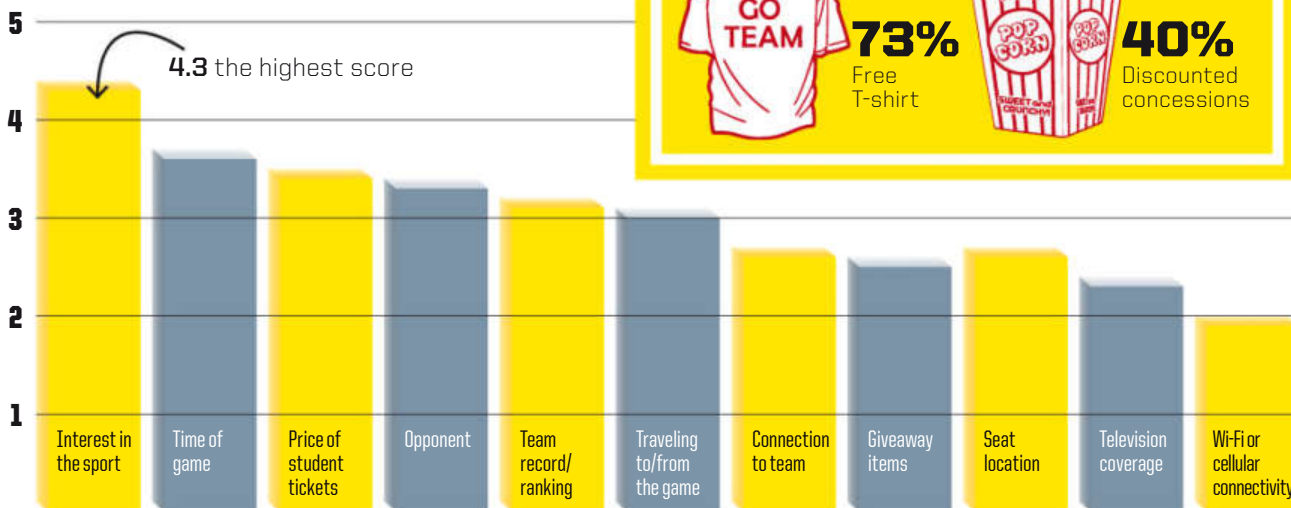
## ATTENDANCE AT COLLEGE

football games has remained relatively flat since 2009, but the average has dropped 7.1% among students, according to a 2014 *Wall Street Journal* study. So many students show up late or leave early—or both—that in 2013 one coach publicly prodded ticket holders to arrive on

time and stay for the duration. The coach? Nick Saban at Alabama. To explore the downturn in face-painters, the National Association of College Marketing Administrators commissioned a study this year that included 65 schools and 18,876 respondents. Here are a few of the findings.

### QUESTION

On a scale from 1 to 5, what influences you to attend a game?



### QUESTION

What motivates you to stay for the entire game?



**73%**

Free T-shirt



**40%**

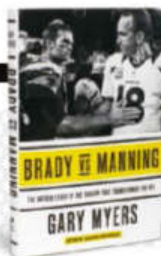
Discounted concessions



### Billion-Dollar Ball

Gilbert M. Gaul

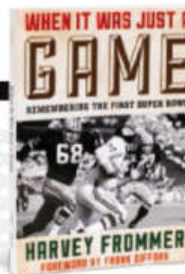
Well-researched exposé fulminates about the obvious: The FBS has been co-opted and commercialized. #behindthecurve



### Brady vs Manning

Gary Myers

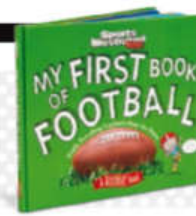
The NFL's key rivalry of the last 15 years through the eyes of foes, family, coaches and the principals. Workmanlike yet compelling. #51tds?



### When It Was Just a Game

Harvey Frommer

An oral history of Super Bowl I moves well while quoting everyone from Pete Rozelle to Howard Cosell, kicked off by Frank Gifford. #lombardi



### My First Book of Football

Beth Bugler and Mark Bechtel

A kickoff-to-final-whistle primer from SI Kids that lays out the basics and key terms. No chapter on CTE. #selfpromotion



BOOKS

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THEY  
SAID IT

**"IT WON'T HELP  
US IF WE LOSE  
NEXT WEEK."**

### Matt Rhule

Temple's coach, assessing the significance of the Owls' 27-10 win last Saturday, their first over Penn State in 74 years.



**SIGN OF THE  
APOCALYPSE**

A group of Flyers fans have started a GoFundMe site aimed at buying the cross-state, NHL-rival Penguins, since Philly "already figuratively owns" the Pens.



**Sofia (Sonya) Kenin** | *Pembroke Pines, Fla.* | *Tennis*

Sonya, a junior who studies online and trains at ProWorld Tennis Academy, took the girls' 18-and-under national hardcourt title in San Diego, beating No. 1 seed Tornado Alicia Black of Boca Raton, Fla., 6-2, 5-7, 7-5. With the win, Sonya earned a berth in the U.S. Open; at 16, she was the youngest entry. She is the 10th-ranked girl in the world.



**Kei Kobayashi** | *San Clemente, Calif.* | *Surfing*

Kei, a junior who is home-schooled, won the boys' 16-and-under Rip Curl Gromsearch event at New Smyrna Beach in Florida to qualify for nationals next month. The 2014 national Gromsearch champ, he helped San Clemente High repeat as the Oakley High School Surf Team Challenge champ last year. In April, Kei earned the NSSA Southwest Open men's title.



**Tatiana Limon** | *Albuquerque* | *Soccer*

Tatiana, a junior striker at St. Pius X High, scored 11 goals in a season-opening, three-game tournament to break the school's career points record with 223. Four days later she scored twice in a 2-1 win over Sandia Prep to break the goals mark with 80. Last year Tatiana led the Sartans to a second straight Class 5A title with 36 goals and 30 assists.

## FACES IN THE CROWD

Edited by ALEXANDRA FENWICK



**Joe Gallardo** | *San Diego* | *Soccer*

Joe, a senior forward in the U.S. U-17 residency program in Bradenton, Fla., scored the 88th-minute equalizer for a 1-1 tie in a friendly with Australia in Limoges, France; two weeks earlier he had a goal in a 2-1 win over Ukraine in Hlinsko, Czech Republic. After breaking his leg in August 2014, Gallardo had seven goals in his first 14 U-17 matches.



**Paula Heuser** | *Monchengladbach, Germany* | *Field Hockey*

Heuser, a junior midfielder at Albany, netted all three goals in a 3-1 season-opening win over Miami (Ohio), then scored twice and had an assist in a 3-1 defeat of Ohio State. Last season she led the nation in points per game [3.0], won the Honda Sport Award for field hockey and was the National Field Hockey Coaches Association player of the year.



**Harry and Artis Price** | *DeLeon Springs, Fla.* | *Waterskiing*

Harry, 88, a retired dentist, and Artis, 85, a retired teacher, each won overall gold in the 85-and-over age groups at nationals in West Palm Beach, Fla. Married for 56 years, they have combined for more than 160 gold medals and have both received the Water Ski Hall of Fame's Award of Distinction.

Nominate Now

To submit a candidate for Faces in the Crowd, go to [SI.com/faces](http://SI.com/faces). For more on outstanding amateur athletes, follow @SI\_Faces on Twitter.





# JUST MY TYPE

→ Interview by **DAN PATRICK**

**DAN PATRICK:** *Who's the best talent to come through the Manning Passing Academy?*

**PEYTON MANNING:** That's been hotly debated. There's never been a high school kid who's come through and I've said, "I know this kid is headed for the NFL." Eli [Manning] was polished, but you just didn't know. Andrew Luck was a camper. Johnny Manziel was a camper. Russell Wilson was a camper. It's hard to say there were guarantees at the time though.

**DP:** *What about college players?*

**PM:** Matthew Stafford [Georgia] threw the ball as well as anyone I've seen as a college player. Eli and Philip Rivers [North Carolina State] were both there at the same time. JaMarcus Russell [LSU] threw the ball farther than anybody I've ever seen. Anytime we were throwing in line, I was sure not to go after JaMarcus. It was going to be such a disappointing throw. He's throwing 80 yards, I'm throwing 47 yards.

**DP:** *Have you put a time frame on how long you'll keep playing?*

**PM:** I don't know if there's a time frame. I'm fired up for the 2015 season. My health is good. I had a good off-season of training. I changed a few things as far



PEYTON MANNING

## FAST TALK

The five-time MVP is entering his 18th (and possibly not final) NFL season well-rested and feeling good. At 39, he can still outgun and—in his own mind, at least—outrun his fellow quarterbacks.

as my training and diet. I feel like I'm in good shape.

**DP:** *So you'll play as long as you're productive?*

**PM:** I think that's the idea for any player. As long as you feel good. As long as you know you can still help the team. Sometimes that decision is easy for people. You have a major injury, you can't get healthy, your body hurts so much, that you're just like This is a no-brainer. That's just not how I feel. Coach [Gary] Kubiak has been very good [at resting] the veteran players. Hopefully that will help all of us throughout the season.

**DP:** *Give me the starting quarterback you could beat in a foot race.*

**PM:** It's a pretty long list.

**DP:** *Really?*

**PM:** You got [Colin] Kaepernick, Wilson, [Michael] Vick. I knock them all out in the first round. What distance?

**DP:** *Forty.*

**PM:** O.K. I get faster the farther I go. Second round a little closer matchup, it'd be me versus Big Ben [Roethlisberger], Eli, Rivers. The class of 2004 QBs. The finale has got to be me versus [Tom] Brady. It'll be a close race.

**DP:** *How much do you care about Deflategate?*

**PM:** Tom is a friend of mine. He'll always be a friend of mine. I don't know all the details. I have not read any of the reports. But our friendship won't change. □

## GUEST SHOTS SAY WHAT?



Former Redskins tight end  
**Chris Cooley**

believes the team's handling of quarterback Robert Griffin III has had a ripple effect in Washington. "It's creating animosity among fans," Cooley said. "A lot are for RG3. A lot are for [Kirk] Cousins. It's not a great chemistry. It's very divisive." ... I asked quarterback legend **Doug Flutie** if he



could have played for Michigan coach Jim

Harbaugh. "I don't know," Flutie said. "Jim and I were with the Bears in 1987. He's got a harsh personality. We get along fine, but he doesn't always give you the warm and fuzzies." ... ESPN



anchor  
**Scott Van Pelt**

said he won't avoid discussing gambling on his new midnight edition of *SportsCenter*: "People have action on games. Brent [Musburger] and Al Michaels mention the spread, and people get all giddy. We're grown-ups. [Betting] happens."

## SI Podcast ▼

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The Case for . . .

# A Running Back to Win the Heisman

BY ZAC ELLIS

## WHEN WISCONSIN

running back Melvin Gordon left for the NFL draft after last season, Big Ten defenses breathed a sigh of relief. In 2014 the Badgers junior rushed for 2,587 yards, the second most in an FBS season behind Oklahoma State's Barry Sanders, who ran for 2,628 yards in 1988. Gordon, now a member of the Chargers, also set a then FBS single-game record with 408 rushing yards in Wisconsin's 59–24 win over Nebraska.

But unlike Sanders, who went on to win the Heisman Trophy in 1988, Gordon finished second in 2014 balloting, losing to Oregon quarterback Marcus Mariota. One of the most remarkable seasons ever by a running back was, by voters' accounts, just not Heisman-worthy. Gordon's snub was the most recent example of a trend: Quarterbacks have won 13 of the last 14 Heismans. Only Mark Ingram's '09 win, after a stellar sophomore season at Alabama, during which he ran for 1,658 yards and 17 touchdowns, has prevented a clean sweep. (USC running back Reggie Bush returned the '05 trophy after the NCAA sanctioned the school for offenses involving Bush.)

Before the proliferation of the spread offense, running backs won 41 of the 79 Heismans handed out between



Leonard Fournette

1935 and 2014, still the highest total for any position. Heck, the iconic trophy is of a ballcarrier dishing out a stiff-arm.

But before anyone suggests a redesign, take note that this could be the season a running back reclaims the statue. With the exception of TCU senior quarterback Trevone Boykin, who set a school record for passing yards (3,901) in 2014, most Heisman-caliber passers enter the '15 season facing questions. Clemson sophomore Deshaun Watson was a stud as a freshman, but he's coming off a torn ACL and a year of rehab. Michigan State senior Connor Cook is NFL-ready but might not have the necessary wheels—five of the last seven Heisman-winning quarterbacks rushed for more than 600 yards. And Dak Prescott, a senior, leads

a Mississippi State squad that brings back the fewest starters (seven) of any SEC team. Then there's Ohio State. Coach Urban Meyer has said he may use both J.T. Barrett and Cardale Jones, but Heisman history isn't friendly to quarterbacks playing musical chairs.

That leaves a hole that any number of rushers could run through. Georgia sophomore Nick Chubb blitzed the SEC for 1,547 yards in backup duty in 2014 and is now the premier weapon in Athens. Leonard Fournette, LSU's 6' 1", 230-pound bruiser, set a Tigers freshman record with 1,034 yards last year. And junior Ezekiel Elliott looked like the best player on Ohio State's roster while rushing for 696 yards and eight touchdowns in the Buckeyes' final three games last season.

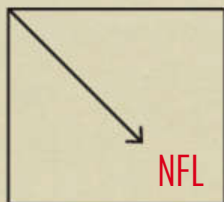
And of course the spotlight matters in a Heisman race. Like Chubb, Fournette and Elliott, Oregon sophomore Royce Freeman, Alabama junior Derrick Henry and Oklahoma sophomore Samaje Perine will get both carries and airtime in high-profile games this fall.

Since Ingram's Heisman win, five rushers have finished in the top four, but statistical comparisons benefit contenders who can throw and run, like dual-threat winners Mariota, Texas A&M's Johnny Manziel in 2012 and Baylor's Robert Griffin III in '11. "With the spread going on, and teams throwing the ball left and right, these quarterbacks are padding their stats and putting up crazy numbers," says Ingram, who's with the Saints. "Melvin Gordon didn't even win it, and he went for 2,000 yards. You have to put up insane numbers to win it as a running back now."

Well, here comes the crazy. □

“You have  
to put up  
insane  
numbers  
to win  
it as a  
running  
back now,”  
says  
Ingram.





When a judge vacated Roger Goodell's suspension of Patriots star quarterback Tom Brady for his role in Deflategate, it marked yet another rebuke to the NFL commissioner's broad interpretation of his own power. While his bosses—the 32 owners of the increasingly valuable NFL franchises—still support him, his days as a disciplinarian may be numbered

BY S.L. PRICE

SPECIAL REPORT

# THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING COMMISSIONER

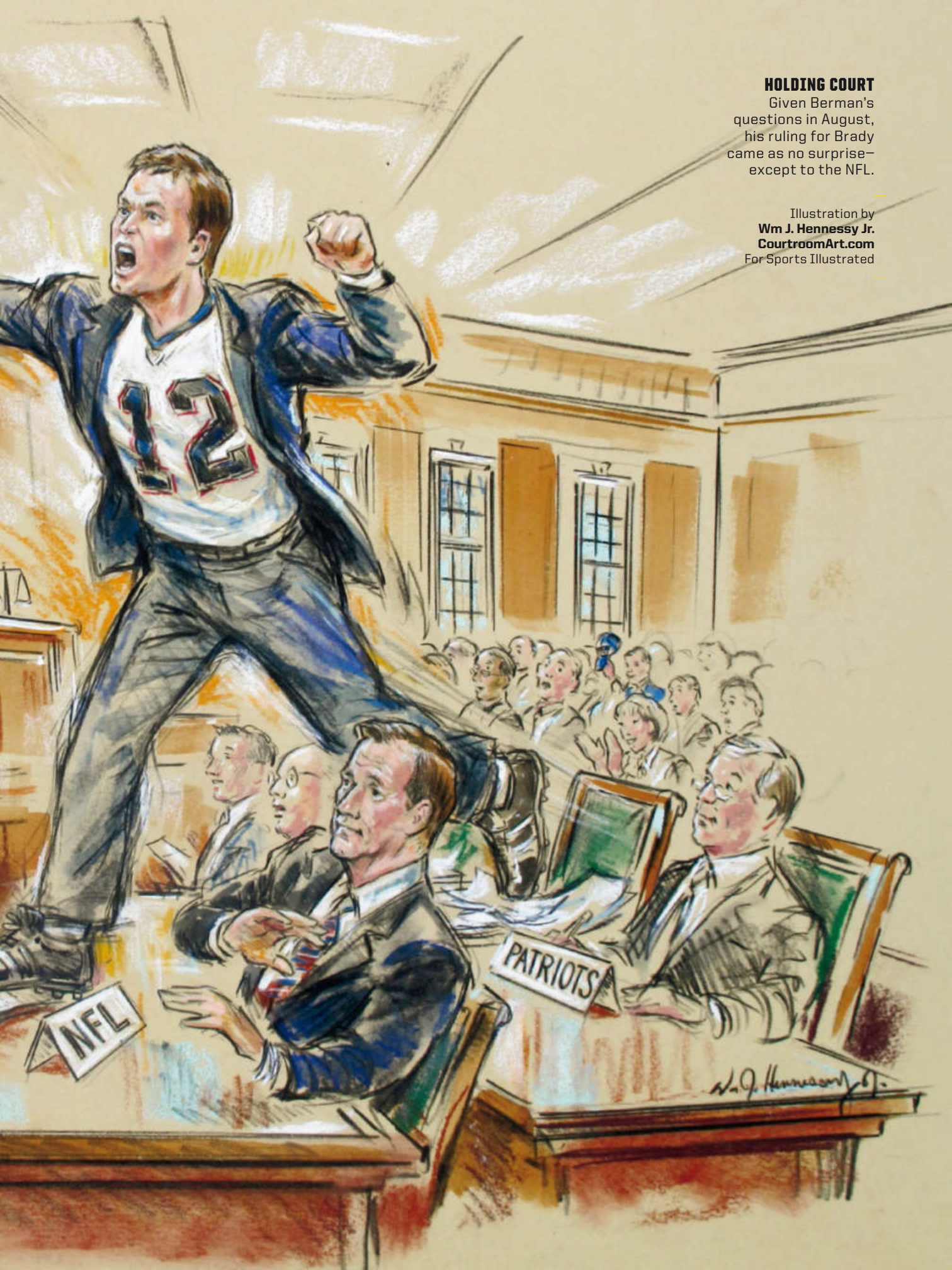




## HOLDING COURT

Given Berman's questions in August, his ruling for Brady came as no surprise—except to the NFL.

Illustration by  
**Wm J. Hennessy Jr.**  
**CourtroomArt.com**  
For Sports Illustrated





*Who does that big monkey think he is? It seems I'll have to show somebody who's running this game.*

—Baseball commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis on Babe Ruth, Oct. 15, 1921

*Aw, tell the old guy to go jump in a lake.*

—Babe Ruth, Oct. 15, 1921

## **S** O HERE'S HOW THAT ONE WENT:

Landis, the white-haired, Biblically-visaged judge who banned eight “Black Sox” players for throwing the 1919 World Series, demanded that the Yankees’ slugger desist from participating in a barnstorming tour. Ruth, the game’s biggest star coming off his greatest year, boasted that the commissioner couldn’t stop him. Landis fined and suspended Ruth for the first six weeks of the ’22 season. Fans were outraged. But the old man stood firm, and the big monkey sat.

Before we move on to the forever war between NFL commissioner Roger Goodell and Patriots star quarterback Tom Brady, it’s important to note the difference a century makes. Calling anyone a monkey, of course, would never fly today. And a lake would hardly be big enough to accommodate the commissioner of today’s American pastime, what with all the volume required for the attendant corporate, legal and p.r. superstructure buttressing the NFL, not to mention its gleaming new Park Avenue headquarters and the stupendous annual revenue—\$12 billion and rising—that envelops and insulates Goodell like a fortress of gold.

The average value of an NFL team has increased by 65% during Goodell’s nine-year tenure, to nearly \$1.5 billion. This is the prime number to factor anytime you hear that his stunningly ham-fisted attempts to channel Judge Landis have jeopardized his job. Even after U.S. District Court judge Richard Berman dealt Goodell another humiliating defeat by vacating Brady’s four-game suspension for his role in Deflategate last week, even amid the crowing coming out of New England and the NFL Players Association, few—if any—colleagues or observers with NFL knowledge consider Goodell’s job in trouble.

“I’ve certainly never had that thought in my mind, that any of these were survival issues for Roger,” said Steelers president and co-owner Art Rooney II in late August. “And I have not gotten that sense from other owners. We have disagreements, but none of this has amounted to something that is a question of Roger’s survival as our commissioner.”

Contacted through a team spokesman after Berman’s ruling last week, Rooney declined to amend his statement. “Roger’s job is safe,” says ex-NFL QB Charlie Batch, a former member of the NFLPA executive committee. “I don’t

think this puts into question anything, on the owners’ side, to make them want to change. His goal was to be a \$25 billion a year industry by 2025, and he’s on his way. If he hits the benchmarks he promised, he’s going to be safe. I don’t think there’s any reason now to question whether he’s able to hit those numbers.”

That doesn’t mean, however, that Goodell has not been weakened by an annus miserabilis that began last fall when courts and arbitrators began to carve back his sentences: Ravens running back Ray Rice’s indefinite suspension for domestic violence was over-

turned in November, Vikings running back Adrian Peterson’s suspension for child abuse was overturned in February, Cowboys defensive end Greg Hardy’s domestic abuse suspension was slashed from 10 games to four in July. All that—plus Goodell predecessor Paul Tagliabue’s rebuke of the multigame suspension of four Saints players in 2012 for engaging in a bounty scheme—has thoroughly undermined Goodell’s self-proclaimed mission to enforce a hard line on personal conduct and competitive integrity.

Call it the Goodell Paradox. Whenever the 56-year-old son of a U.S. senator has tried to project power, to dispense what Berman stingingly termed “his own brand of industrial justice,” he has succeeded only in eroding his moral authority. His most severe punishments feel arbitrary or disproportionate—a result, says one former league executive who worked with Goodell on several major projects, of “shooting from the hip and making it up as he goes along and trying to be too tough.” Goodell has skillfully cultivated his most vital voting bloc—the 32 NFL owners—but unlike effective communicators such as former baseball commissioner A. Bartlett Giamatti and the NBA’s David Stern, he has been abysmal at selling his reasoning to the public. Working often under the advice of pollster Frank Luntz, Goodell was AWOL for Q and A’s after his ruling on the Patriots for Spygate in 2007 (page 32), issued vague platitudes in his press conference on Rice, and declined comment for this story.

But Exhibit A, of course, is now Deflategate. Though Goodell clearly believes that Brady and the Patriots cheated—and Berman’s ruling did nothing to dispute that (the Pats still lose two draft choices and must pay a \$1 million fine)—neither the



### **SUITING UP**

The judge did not rule on whether Brady and the Pats had cheated, just that the punishment was not justified.







**If you don't take the questions and explain your position," says Vincent, "you have a growing political problem."**



#### **MISMANAGEMENT**

A longtime supporter of Goodell, Robert Kraft (with coach Bill Belichick) savaged the league's strategy.

league-commissioned Wells Report nor bland explanations by Goodell and his staff convincingly showed how, exactly, the reigning Super Bowl MVP could or did gain an unfair edge with a "general awareness" of a minuscule deflation of balls during last season's 45-7 AFC championship game victory over the Colts.

"I don't think Roger gets out there enough and explains what he's doing," says Fay Vincent, baseball's commissioner from 1989 to '92. "I don't think he stands up and takes the heat. But it's innate: You like it or you don't. If you stay inside and don't take the questions and explain your position, you have a growing political problem. Roger Goodell has a growing political problem, but it's under his control. He's got to get people to understand what he's doing and why, to believe in his goodwill and accept that moral authority. He's got to come across as the ultimate protector of football."

Those who have seen Goodell in action say he's a talented negotiator and tireless worker with a fierce temper, but he has no legal training and he surrounds himself with loyalists. An economics major at Washington & Jefferson College, the league lifer started as an intern with the NFL in 1982. No one doubts his devotion to the game's integrity, but the pattern of reversible rulings suggests either a staff that's reluctant to question him or sloppy vetting by advisers like executive vice

president and general counsel Jeff Pash and outside counsel Gregg Levy. Adolpho Birch, the NFL's VP in charge of labor policy, was a public disaster when he tried to defend the original Ray Rice decision last fall, but the quiet departure last week of VP of communications Paul Hicks may well be the lone—and, if so, paltry—admission that the NFL's procedure for meting out and explaining disciplinary acts has tripped into incoherence.

"It is all about politics and understanding your constituency and how to govern and knowing your own limitations," says Frank Hawkins, the NFL's vice president, business affairs, from 1993 to 2008. "And having staff and an inner circle of owners who counterbalance your own failings. I don't think Rog has the right staff, and as a result, failings that his staff should've guarded him against are hurting him. That doesn't necessarily mean that he is in trouble in terms of his tenure. But could I see it hurting the commissionership? Yeah, I could."

**T**HE DESCENT from Kenesaw Mountain to the Incredible Shrinking Commissioner hardly began with Brady, Rice or even Goodell himself. It has been a long, steady decline, and seems almost inevitable when you consider that Landis's 24-year tenure almost died aborning. Terrified that the Black Sox scandal would kill their game, baseball owners offered the simon-pure jurist total control in 1920—and instantly tried grabbing it back during contract talks by watering down the "best interests of the game" clause.

"You have told the world that my powers are to be absolute," Landis said. "I wouldn't take this job for all the gold in the world unless I knew my hands were free." The owners caved, and Ruth started clubbing home runs again.

ROGER  
GOODELL  
NFL

Baseball was saved, and the template of the omnipotent sports commissioner—a secular pope vested with wisdom and fierce independence—took root. The problem, though, is that once Landis passed, the template was never again quite accurate.

“People assume that the commissioner represents the full range of interests—the players, the public at large, the political community—but he does not,” says Vincent. “The commissioner is an employee of the owners, but has to discipline the owners if they get in trouble. It’s an anomaly, and that confusion causes a lot of trouble. You can see it with Goodell: He works for the owners, but the real people at interest—the public—don’t think so. They think he works in part for them. I don’t know how you straighten it out.”

On paper the NFL commissioner never had Landis’s unilateral power, especially over iconoclastic owners like the late Al Davis, but by the time football replaced baseball as the national pastime in the early 1970s, the office had plenty of clout. Pete Rozelle suspended “Golden Boy” running back Paul Hornung and former All-Pro defensive tackle Alex Karras for the 1963 season for gambling, and neither protested. In ’69, Rozelle threatened to suspend reigning Super Bowl MVP Joe Namath—“the Tom Brady of his day,” says Tagliabue—from the NFL until he sold his interest in a New York City bar frequented by alleged mobsters. Namath, after refusing and tearfully “retiring,” buckled, too.

“It used to be that the commissioner did everything with no review by anybody, and the labor committee was made up of people like Vince Lombardi,” Tagliabue says. “Now there’re professionals involved, arbitrators; there’s neutral arbitration on steroid and drug violations, off-field violations are done with appeals that don’t come to the commissioner. And it seems like every one of these issues becomes a test case of the commissioner’s authority.”

This comes from the man who dealt Goodell his most embarrassing setback before last week. It was Tagliabue, after all, who was appointed by Goodell to serve as arbitrator on Bountygate—and whose surprise ruling set the tone for all the rulings that have come since. Like the Deflategate decision, Tagliabue’s pushback on Goodell’s sanctions had little to do with the transgression itself. In his ruling Tagliabue upheld the NFL’s key findings, as well as the yearlong suspension of coach Sean Payton and fines levied against Saints staff and players, but he also overturned all player suspensions as excessive and chided his former lieutenant for bucking precedent and lacking proportion—even common sense—in his punishments.

“A sharp change in sanctions or discipline can often be seen as arbitrary and as an impediment rather than an instrument of change,” Tagliabue wrote in his ruling. “This is what we see on the record here.”

The two men have barely spoken since. Tagliabue says that his intention was to render a compromise in which both sides could claim victory and keep the matter from ending up in court. “Once you get into this litigation mode, it’s an endless process,” Tagliabue says. “With Bountygate, I said, ‘Enough is enough.’ I used to use the expression, ‘All’s well that ends well.’ But after I became commissioner, I just started saying, ‘All’s well that ends.’”

The lesson didn’t take. Tagliabue blames the owners’ lockout in 2011



**Whenever Goodell has tried to project power, he has succeeded only in eroding his moral authority.**

for lending a take-no-prisoners’ approach to every dispute between Goodell and the traditionally weak NFLPA, and the owners’ gains in the subsequent collective bargaining agreement remain a triumph of Goodell’s tenure. Yet, ironically, it’s the union’s most significant concession—the granting to the commissioner, through Article 46 of the CBA, not just a broad power to rule on “conduct detrimental” but also the right to serve as arbitrator on any disciplinary appeal—that led to the union’s most important victory.

The fact that judges have long been loath to overturn a collectively bargained arbitrator’s decision emboldened Goodell—and his staff—to assume that he had latitude to levy nearly any punishment on players. Poisoned relations with the NFLPA all but guaranteed an appeal, and the Goodell Paradox kicked in: He overreached with the punishment, then miscalculated by racing to get the decision confirmed in the seemingly friendly confines of the Southern District Court, based in New York City.

“Every agreement that’s too good carries with it the seeds of its own disintegration—and that agreement was too good,” Hawkins says of the 2011 CBA. “The union got taken to the cleaners, and that breeds resentment. So they’re not going to give him any easy victories. Anything that requires union cooperation over the next 10 years? I don’t see it happening.”

STEPHAN SAVOIA/AP (TOP); JIM ROGASH/GETTY IMAGES (3)





## BRADY BUNCH

Goodell lost in the court of public opinion—in New England anyway—well before he lost in Berman's court.

**I**N THE weeks before the Brady ruling, there was no mistaking the NFL's confidence that Goodell would prevail. Though Berman's questioning at an Aug. 19 hearing indicated skepticism about the Wells Report and about Goodell's statements equating ball deflation to steroid use, and though the judge seemed unimpressed by the league's insistence that "the findings of the commissioner are entitled to deference," Goodell's camp professed no worry. "The judge is trying to force a settlement," said a league source two days later.

The case? Airtight. The steroid analogy? Spot on. The sell? National polls found that nearly 70% of avid fans believed that Brady cheated. "Our lawyers believe we've followed the law and done things right," the league source said. "Our lawyers are courtroom lawyers, and the other side—[NFLPA attorney Jeffrey] Kessler and those guys—are political. They try the case on the court-house steps. And more power to 'em: It works a lot of times. But we believe we've followed the law, and the law is very strong that arbitrators' rulings are very, very rarely overturned."

Outside that echo chamber, though,

some saw enough holes in the NFL's behavior to make the turnover possible. Even after two allies—Tagliabue and Harold Henderson, a 16-year NFL employee handpicked to arbitrate the Hardy ruling—had essentially warned him through their rulings to be more deliberate, Goodell hit the gas. His righthand man, Pash, served as both co-lead investigator and editor of the supposedly independent Wells Report. (Pash and Levy declined to comment to SI.) Goodell wouldn't let Brady's lawyers interview Pash or review the evidence. "Fundamentally unfair," Berman said, and detailed it all so encyclopedically that many believe Goodell could lose this one on appeal too.

"He's getting strange advice," says one former pro sports executive. "I hate to say it, but it probably helps to be a lawyer. Since you know you're going to be attacked by competent lawyers and have an enemy in the union who's trying to bring you down, you've got to do your best to make it judgment-proof."

A league source calls that view simplistic, considering the string of court victories that the Pash and Levy-advised NFL has won, including April's \$765 million settlement to the concussion litigation, and repeated challenges to the 2011 lockout. "I worked with these guys since 1989," says Bill Polian, a former Colts executive. "They're excellent lawyers. To cast them as villains is to me despicable." Yet even Patriots owner Robert Kraft, in the aftermath of the Brady decision, castigated "the lawyers at the league [who] still insisted on imposing and defending unwarranted and unprecedented discipline."

Thus, Goodell ran into a judge who represents a nightmare for commissioners present and future. Says David Stern, who has never run across Berman professionally, "In a court with one of the busiest dockets in the nation, Judge Berman was dazzled by the headlights of professional sports and crossed into the wrong lane and engaged the federal courts in the intricacies of running a sports league. Where they have no business."

With the help of Berman and David Doty, the judge in Minnesota who overturned the Peterson suspension (and who quipped last week, he's "not sure the commissioner understands there is a CBA"), the union has established a winning strategy. As long as Goodell insists on retaining the right to serve as arbitrator on discipline appeals, an aggrieved player, the NFLPA—even an owner—has reason to believe a court can provide relief.

Time-consuming, costly litigation distracting from the on-field product is hardly what the owners bargained for when they made Goodell the NFL conduct cop. After Berman's ruling, Patriots president Jonathan Kraft, Falcons owner Arthur Blank—one of Goodell's key allies—and 49ers CEO Jed York all indicated support for reviewing the commissioner's role in discipline matters at the owners' meeting in October. Independent arbitrators on appeals have been part of the NBA, NHL and major league baseball for decades.

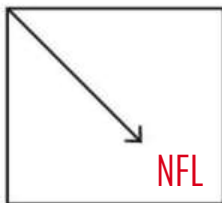
"It's on the way," Tagliabue says. "Commissioners are almost being forced to be involved less and less on player disciplinary matters. That trend will continue. But Roger's still got the responsibility of looking after the players and, most important, the experience of the fans."

Indeed, if he's smart, Goodell will now focus on what he does best: revenue enhancement. The temptation will be to blame Berman or Brady or the times we live in for his diminishing stature, but football's last big commissioner shouldn't delude himself. It couldn't have happened without him. □



For an exclusive video feature on the Vikings' Anthony Barr, or to watch any of the Rising Stars series presented by Symetra, go to [SI.com/risingstars](http://SI.com/risingstars)





# FEAR AND LOATHING

**The Patriots' latest "-gate" is seemingly closed, but the team's tactics have bred deep distrust, and in some cases, outright paranoia. Gamesmanship? Cheating? Hard evidence is hard to come by, but suspicions about the wildly successful Bill Belichick regime won't subside anytime soon**

**BY GREG BISHOP, MICHAEL ROSENBERG  
AND THAYER EVANS**

## SPECIAL REPORT



**LATE LAST JANUARY**, with Tom Brady under siege, Bill Belichick playing physicist, Robert Kraft going rogue and the country debating a strange controversy known as Deflategate, the Seahawks arrived in Arizona for Super Bowl XLIX. They were not too concerned with the Patriots' latest "-gate." But they had been warned about the potential for another one.

Multiple teams called Seattle, unsolicited, with advice on how to secure the team's practices for the Super Bowl. Their message was clear: *You're not playing John Fox's Broncos again. You're facing Bill Belichick and the Patriots. You never know who might be watching.*

### WHAT'S ON THEIR MINDS?

Opponents respect the Patriots' talent and smarts—and worry that they will cross lines other teams won't in the quest for victories.

Photograph by  
**ROB CARR**  
Getty Images









## THE PATRIOTS

The Seahawks trained in Tempe, on Arizona State's outdoor practice fields, which left a large perimeter to secure. They worked hard to secure it. They hired extra guards and scanned any area nearby with a vantage point of the field. Security personnel monitored what locals call "A" Mountain, the 1,400-foot hill that towers above the university's athletic complex. They combed the parking garage and parking lots between Sun Devil Stadium and the practice fields. And they checked around the boundary of the complex, where baseball and softball fields and various buildings provided clear views of Seattle's Super Bowl drills. Several observers who have attended practices for other Super Bowls noted the unusual, Secret Service-like level of activity.

The Seahawks didn't discover any covert operations. Most of the time New England's opponents don't.

But they almost always look.

**A**T VARIOUS times over the last decade, at least 19 NFL franchises took precautions against the Patriots that they didn't take against any other opponent, people who worked for those teams told SI. Those concerns have not waned in the eight years that have passed since the Spygate scandal. The list of safeguards is long and varied. Teams commonly clear out trash cans in their hotel meeting rooms in New England because they believe the Patriots go through them. One longtime head coach said he ran fake plays in his Saturday walkthroughs at Gillette Stadium because he thought the Patriots might be spying on his team. Another team has taken things further: It fled Gillette and found a different place to practice, and on game day it piled trunks of equipment against the double doors in the back of the visitors' locker room so nobody could get in. That same team kicked the visiting locker room manager out of the office he occupies near the clubhouse.

In September 2007 the Patriots were found to have illegally videotaped Jets coaches during a game, something opposing teams had caught them doing at least twice previously. The NFL fined Belichick \$500,000, the organization \$250,000 and took away a first-round draft choice—and long-held suspicions about the Patriots cheating under Belichick were legitimized. Whispers about their activities became a year-round conversation throughout the NFL. Belichick's coaching brilliance has never been in dispute—his ability to prepare and adapt are legendary. But he is not trusted. Even in a league filled with coaches who cover their mouths with call sheets and guard injury reports like nuclear codes, many teams view the Patriots as willing to cross lines others won't.

You could say the rest of the NFL is paranoid, and you might be right. What's not debatable is that New England, because of that lack of trust, is inside opponents' heads, forcing other teams to devote time, brainpower and resources to protecting themselves. Teams wonder why ball boys in Foxborough seem to stand closer to opposing coaches than they do anywhere else. It is common for opposing teams to have an employee guard their locker room all day when they visit Foxborough, something they rarely do for other road games. One team that played there in recent years put a padlock on the doors when it arrived on the Saturday before a game. The Patriots threatened to call the fire chief. When the visiting team challenged them to do it, the Pats backed down and the padlock remained. "There has never been a time when we have knowingly allowed a team to padlock



### IT'S A REP

Six months after Seattle took caution before the Super Bowl, Robert Kraft and Belichick reacted to Brady's ban.



doors," says Patriots spokesman Stacey James. "That's a fire code violation."

Some of the security measures are small. It is standard NFL practice for home teams to help unload equipment from buses, but one AFC team won't let the Patriots do it. Other precautions are extreme: At least five teams have swept their hotels, locker rooms or coaches' booths in New England for listening devices, sometimes hiring outside professionals. None have been found.

And while the Pats insist Spygate is ancient history, other teams aren't so sure. During one Patriots road game last season their opponent suspected a man was illegally videotaping them with an iPhone from the visiting sideline. The man wasn't wearing New England team gear, but the people who were filming during Spygate often weren't wearing team gear either. It felt too much like Spygate II for the home team's liking, and the man was kicked out of the stadium. James says





**The Seahawks hired extra security guards and scanned any area with a vantage point of their Super Bowl drills. They combed the parking garage and the parking lots; they checked around the boundary of the complex.**

the team is unaware of any such incident and is sure “it never happened with a Patriots employee.”

The rest of the league has been on high alert in other ways too. The NFL has changed several rules over the last decade in response to issues raised about the Patriots or to close rule-book loopholes exploited by them, according to three people familiar with the competition committee’s decisions. In 2007, after the Patriots were accused of manipulating coach-to-quarterback radio systems and game clocks, the league mandated neutral operators for both in playoff games. After the Ravens complained about New England’s deployment of ineligible receivers in a playoff game last January, the NFL declared that in the future a formation the Patriots used will be illegal. (The Patriots say they confirmed the legality of the formation with the league before the Ravens game.) “[The Pats] were mentioned [in competition

committee meetings] way more than anybody else,” one source familiar with the committee’s discussions in recent years said.

“All this stuff speaks to manifestations of the same thing,” says one NFL personnel executive. “It’s the Patriots, and it’s everybody else.”

**T**HESE SUSPICIONS may help explain why NFL commissioner Roger Goodell was so determined to investigate the Patriots for Deflategate. SI spoke with dozens of people throughout pro football: team presidents, general managers, head coaches, assistants and players; some are still in prominent positions and others no longer work in the league. While they were mostly reluctant to talk on the record, most believe the Patriots have played fast and loose with league rules for years—breaking them or looking for ways around them—and they want to see the organization held responsible.

In some cases there is no rule explicitly banning the alleged actions. One example: Another AFC team has brought its own sports drinks because the ones the Patriots supply are often late, warm or both.

Unethical? Or just gamesmanship? “They’ve created a culture where that type of behavior is encouraged and rewarded,” one team executive says. “Everybody there is supposed to make the visitor uncomfortable—do everything that is borderline against the rules, but clearly against the principles of good sportsmanship.”

Incidents that might be considered innocent snafus elsewhere are viewed more skeptically in Foxborough. Headset failures are not uncommon around the league—Sun Life Stadium in Miami, for instance, is notorious for frequency issues. But representatives from

several teams told SI they have experienced problems with the coaches’ equipment at Gillette—echoing a complaint from the Jaguars after their 2006 playoff loss there, when coach Jack Del Rio said his team’s headsets “mysteriously malfunctioned” for most of the first half. In May, Browns linebacker Karlos Dansby told ProFootballTalk.com that his on-field headset stopped working when his Cardinals played the Patriots in 2008, and he does not think it was an accident: “They gonna do what they gotta do to win. It’s just how they operate.”

Home teams are supposed to provide certain communications equipment, but opponents often don’t trust the Patriots to do it. One team griped to SI that New England supplied a corroded battery pack. Another current head coach brings his own equipment because he doesn’t trust the Patriots to supply anything of quality. A representative of a third team says the Pats provided headset gear that looked “like it had been run over by a lawn mower. Frayed wires, the speaker is all chopped up. . . .” James says that it is league policy for all headset batteries to be changed 30 minutes before a game, and that the team has “always complied with that.” He adds, “We’ve never been cited by the league for

doing anything wrong as it pertains to communication device violations.”

Another team executive says, “Anybody who has gone in there in the last five years will tell you some sort of problem or snag they never hit any other place. They are the worst hosts in football.”

**B**ILL BELICHICK learned to study football long before he coached it, at the foot of his father, Steve, an assistant coach at Navy. Steve Belichick was greatly respected for his ability to prepare for an opponent. In 1962 he wrote a book called *Football Scouting Methods*, detailing all the ways a scout can ready his team. “It must be remembered that the primary objective of scouting is to gather as much pertinent information as you can,” Steve wrote. “In order to do this, you must carefully observe and record what the opposition does.”

From Steve, Bill learned that if you take away an opponent’s strength, you will probably win. His ability to do that, along with Brady’s sustained excellence, have separated the Patriots from the rest of the NFL. And in Belichick’s world, no detail is too small, no idea too radical. “They do the best job, week in and week out, of coaching all the little things that make a difference in winning and losing,” says Hall of Fame executive Bill Polian, who built the Peyton Manning–led Colts teams that were the Pats’ chief rivals through the 2000s. “There is no question in my mind about that.”

Admirers and critics agree: Belichick will walk 10 miles to gain an inch on his opponent. For example, every Friday teams must announce which injured players are doubtful, questionable or probable to play that Sunday.

Teams usually take 53 players to the game and announce, 90 minutes before kickoff, which seven are inactive. But sometimes, at Saturday-night meetings, Belichick tells his staff which players on the opposing team were not on the flight to New England, a source with knowledge of the meetings tells SI. It’s not clear how Belichick knows. But he does.

This gives the Patriots a few extra hours to adjust to any roster changes. There is no rule against this, though some would argue that it’s unseemly. Others wonder how much of an advantage such knowledge really provides. But it’s quintessential Belichick.

**I**N THE popular retelling of Spygate, Jets coach Eric Mangini, a former Belichick assistant, ratted out his ex-boss. In reality, Mangini called Belichick before their September 2007 game to warn him not to film New York’s signals. And by that point the league was already eyeing the Patriots.

In 2006, after several teams—including the Giants, who caught the Patriots videotaping coaches’ signals in a preseason game that year—complained to the league about New England’s video espionage, NFL senior vice president for football operations Ray Anderson issued a memo reminding teams that “video taping of any type, including but not limited to taping of an opponent’s offensive or defensive signals, is prohibited on the sidelines, in the coaches’



**Sometimes in Saturday-night meetings Belichick tells his staff which players on the opposing team were not on the flight to New England. It’s not clear how he knows. But he does.**

booth, in the locker room, or at any other locations accessible to club staff members during the game.”

Two months later Packers security in Green Bay noticed a man filming with a small handheld camera on the sideline. When the man was confronted, he said the Patriots coaches wanted him to capture field conditions. In the second quarter security saw him apparently filming signals from a tunnel in an end zone corner and stopped him again.

During the game one former Packers staffer says, the Patriots seemed to know Green Bay’s defensive calls from the outset. The Patriots won 35–0. “Whatever we called, they got us out of our base call every single play,” the staffer says. “I’ve never seen anybody be able to do that before.”

According to a league source, the NFL recirculated Anderson’s memo before the 2007 season. Given the memo’s existence and all those suspicions and complaints, why did Belichick continue to defy the video rule? Why did he put his franchise in position to be disciplined and disgraced? Perhaps he didn’t





#### ON DEFENSE

Belichick faced the press after Spygate in '07, then again last January after Brady (above) used under-inflated balls.

anticipate severe sanctions—aside from saying he “misinterpreted” the rule, the coach has never explained himself. Certainly the advantage he stood to gain is significant. Trying to figure out signals with the naked eye is legal, and most teams try it. Doing it with video cameras is illegal because a team can rewind the tape and match signals with play calls. As a longtime NFL head coach tells SI, “If a good quarterback has that information, he can really use it. It’s way, way, way important.”

One person who knows Belichick well says he does not consider the coach “a cheat.” But he acknowledges that, while others might simply obey a rule, Belichick will search for loopholes and gray areas to exploit—he’ll “study it and take it to the nth degree.”

“This guy is two steps ahead of everybody because he is so brilliant. If you’re going to walk the line, every once in a while you’re stepping over. Sometimes somebody has to pull him back in. In his mind, he thinks: I’ll get an advantage and somebody else can figure out if it’s illegal. My job is to coach a football team.”

**T**HE EFFECTS of Spygate are still rippling through the NFL. In the wake of the scandal Goodell asked for two changes to league operations to help him deal with integrity-of-the-game issues.

First, he demanded that every coach and general manager in the league sign an affidavit each year affirming that they did not cheat and were not aware of any cheating by their employees. Teams submit those forms at the end of the league year in March. Even a coach fired at the end of the regular season must sign the affidavit for his former team.

Goodell used those affidavits to slam the Saints in 2012 for their bounty scandal. When he famously told New Orleans general manager Mickey Loomis and coach Sean Payton that “ignorance is not an excuse,” this was not empty rhetoric. The affidavits make that the official policy.

Goodell’s second request after Spygate was to lower the burden of proof required of the league when handing down punishment in integrity-of-the-game cases. The old standard was “clear and convincing evidence.” The NFL switched the language in its Integrity of the Game policy to the less rigorous standard of “preponderance of evidence.” In the legal world that means there is more than a 50% chance that something occurred. In other words, more probable than not—the key phrase in the Wells Report that Goodell used to justify his Deflategate crackdown.

The league had engineered its code of conduct to make it easier to convict and punish the next perpetrator of a Spygate. It had also created a climate in which it was safe to make public accusations against the Patriots—no hard evidence needed. Former Rams star Marshall Faulk openly wondered in 2013 if the Patriots illegally scouted the Rams before upsetting them in Super Bowl XXXVI in ’02. The *Boston Herald* had reported in ’08 that the Patriots illegally recorded the Rams’ walkthrough, but the *Herald* retracted its report, and nobody has proved it to be true.

Of course, since Spygate other organizations have been caught breaking rules. Earlier this year Goodell suspended Falcons president Rich McKay from the NFL competition committee, fined the team \$350,000 and docked it a fifth-round pick because it had piped in artificial crowd noise during home games in 2013 and ’14. And last March the commissioner suspended Browns general manager Ray Farmer for four games and fined the team \$250,000 for the GM’s texting coaches during a game.

But while the Falcons and Farmer took full responsibility, the Patriots never really have—which makes it easy for opponents, rightly or wrongly, to view other teams’ transgressions as isolated incidents and New England’s as part of a pattern. Sometimes other franchises’ missteps reflect poorly on New England. In 2010 the Broncos were caught filming a 49ers walkthrough in London. Denver’s coach at the time was Josh McDaniels, the Patriots’ offensive coordinator from ’06 to ’08. The Broncos’ video operations director, Steve Scarnecchia, had worked from ’01 to ’05 as a video assistant for New England, where his father, Dante, was a longtime offensive line coach.

McDaniels claimed he never watched the tape, but he also didn’t turn in Scarnecchia to the league. The NFL fined McDaniels and the team \$50,000 each, and McDaniels and Scarnecchia were fired shortly after. In 2012, McDaniels returned to the Patriots and has been their offensive coordinator since.

Belichick rarely speaks about Spygate. But last January, as he vehemently defended his organization against the ball-deflating allegations, he broke his silence on the matter. “Look, that’s a whole ’nother discussion but, the guy’s giving signals out in front of 80,000 people, O.K.?”

Belichick said then. “Like there were a lot of other teams doing at that time . . . forget about that. Everybody sees our guy in front of 80,000 people. There he is.

“It was wrong, we were disciplined for it. That’s it. We never did it again. We’re never going to do it again. And anything else that’s close, we’re not going to do either. . . . Anything that’s even remotely close, we’re on the side of caution.”

Spygate spawned unprecedented sanctions and an inquiry by then Senator Arlen Specter. But the NFL’s probe did not get very far. “No one ever knew exactly what was done,” one former team executive tells SI. Even staffers who were involved in Spygate didn’t fully understand its purpose. As former Patriots videographer Matt Walsh told the *The New York Times* in 2008, “They just told me to film the signals, pass the tape along to Ernie Adams.”

Adams, the Patriots’ Football Research Director, is Belichick’s closest adviser. He doesn’t coach, but he has his own direct phone line to Belichick during games, and his reclusive nature, nebulous job title and role in Spygate have led people around the league to speculate on what else he is up to. Even longtime Patriots employees are not sure exactly what he does.

**I**N THE post-Spygate NFL, it’s easy for the Patriots’ opponents to see—or imagine they see—planning in random events and conspiracy in coincidences. “I just know that every time we went up there, there was always something at our hotel,” says former linebacker Bart Scott. “It was always stuff like that with New England. You knew what you were going to get with them.”

You will get uncomfortable. You will get suspicious.

You will also get hit by one of the great winning machines in American sports history—four Super Bowl titles and the league’s best winning percentage (.759) since Brady took over as the starting QB in 2001. “You play the Patriots, and they know almost everything you’re doing and every defense that you’re in,” says Chris Harris Jr., the Broncos cornerback. “Which is crazy.”

But not necessarily duplicitous. Polian says thinking the Patriots win simply because “there is skullduggery involved is foolish.” And even New England’s harshest critics agree: The Patriots would win even if they always followed every rule. Belichick and Brady are too good. Some in the NFL hoped (and maybe even believed) that after Spygate the Patriots’ house would crumble. But Belichick’s winning percentage is actually higher since 2007 (.781) than it was before (.670). To some opponents every victory and superlative feeds the idea that the Patriots are aided by black arts.

Take New England’s aversion to fumbles over the last decade, which has drawn scrutiny since Deflategate. In Brady’s first five years as a

starter (2001 to ’05) the Patriots ranked 14th in the league in total fumbles. But since ’06, when a rule change took effect allowing road teams to provide their own balls on offense—previously home teams provided all game balls—the Patriots have fumbled less than all but one other team in the NFL. Especially interesting to suspicious opponents is the way New England’s fumble rate on the road dropped when it was able to control its own game balls. While their fumble rate at home

**Whether you consider the Pats cheaters depends on your vantage point. Former NFL running back Thomas Jones says they stand alone in regard to the measures they take to win games “hands down,” adding “75% of it is sour grapes.”**

stayed fairly constant after the rule change, since ’06 the Patriots have the fewest fumbles on the road after ranking 16th from ’01 to ’05.

Is it proof that the Patriots have a history of bettering their grip by deflating balls? Of course not—but it’s more than enough to fuel conspiracy theories. One team executive says that before his team played the Patriots last season, “we looked into [their] fumble ratio. . . . Their backs don’t fumble the ball. People say, Well, [deflation] doesn’t really matter. I can tell you that if the ball is softer, it makes all the difference in the world.”

**W**HETHER YOU consider the Patriots cheaters depends on your vantage point. The league says they have been caught twice. To some, that’s the answer. Others say that the urban legends far outnumber the actual violations. Former NFL running back Thomas Jones, who played for five teams, says the Pats stand alone in regard to the measures they take in order to win games, “hands down,” adding “I’d say like 75% of it is sour grapes.”

Those who say the Patriots are totally innocent ignore the facts. Those who say the Patriots cheat at every turn are likely paranoid. But opponents don’t trust the Patriots to play fair, and they say they have





good reasons not to. What's not in doubt is that the Patriots have won far more than any other team in this era, and the obsession with what they may or may not be doing is as much a part of their mystique as Belichick's game-planning or Brady's coolness in the pocket. One league source says the suspicions help the Patriots because teams are spooked and distracted: "If the plane is late, they're going to accuse [Belichick] of air-traffic control. It's always going to be billed as this deliberate thing."

Belichick is 63. The rumors and whispers will follow him to Canton someday, as will a legion of admirers. In the meantime the Hooded One tells his own staffers, Watch what you leave in hotel trash cans. Be careful whom you trust. When the Patriots played the Panthers in the 2004 Super Bowl, Belichick successfully lobbied to practice indoors on Friday, rather than outdoors at Rice, because he was concerned about spies.

He has built a Hall of Fame career on having more information than his opponent and knowing how to use it. And those who know him best understand that. Nick Saban was Belichick's defensive coordinator in Cleveland. When Saban left Louisiana State for the Dolphins in 2005, he insisted that his defense change its signals before playing the Patriots. "They'll get them," Saban said, according to one staffer.

In Saban's second year Miami upset New England. In the locker room afterward two Dolphins players said they benefited from inside information: Their team had purchased audio of Brady's signal-calling, and it helped them figure out what play was coming.

Saban dismissed the story, saying his team has simply studied TV replays of Brady. When reporters asked Belichick about it the next day, the game's most creative competitor laughed.

"Technology, that's not really my thing," Belichick said, nine months before his team's illegal videotaping system would be exposed. "I can barely turn the computer on and off." □



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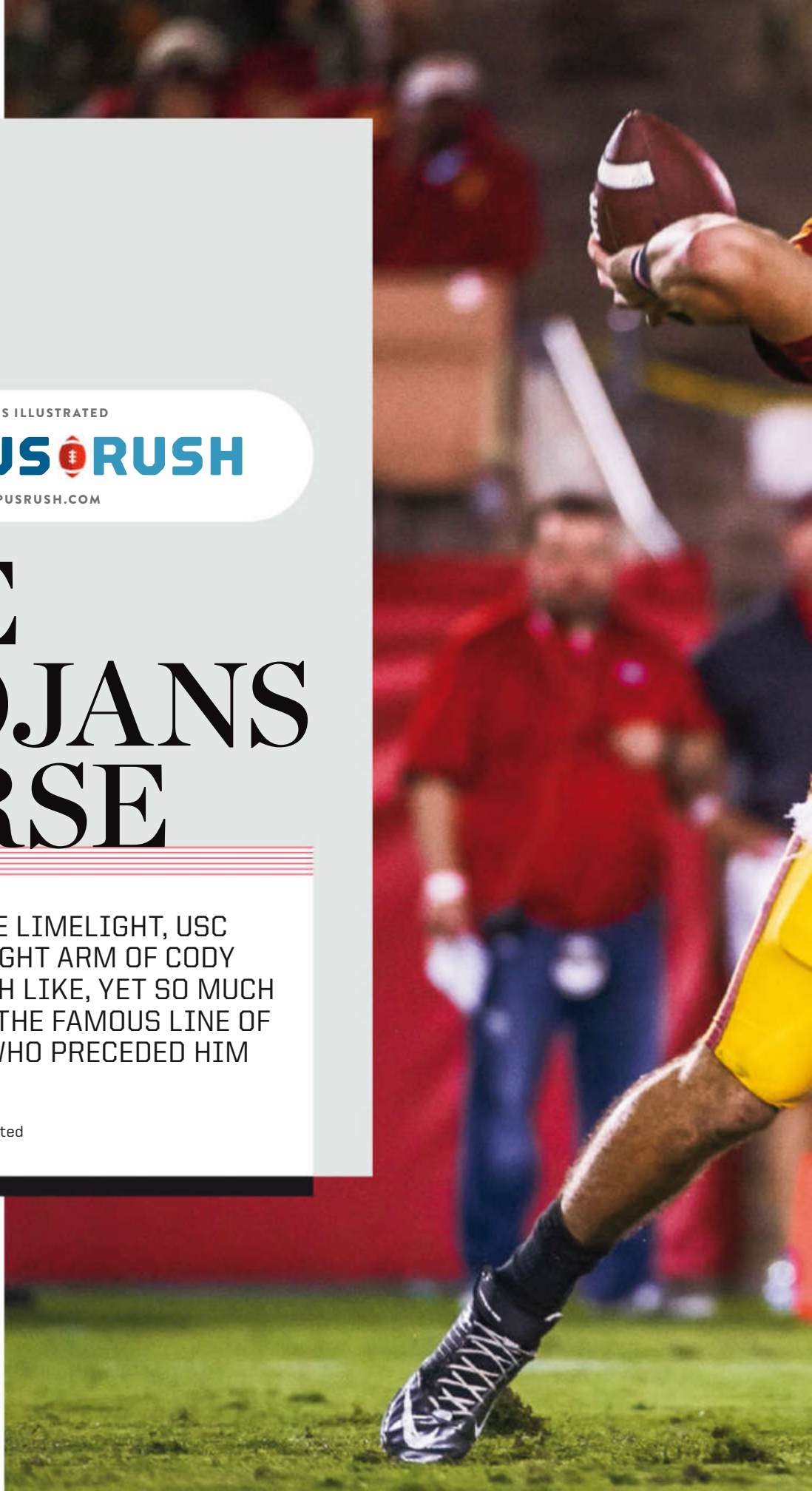
TO RETURN TO THE LIMELIGHT, USC  
WILL RIDE THE RIGHT ARM OF CODY  
KESSLER, SO MUCH LIKE, YET SO MUCH  
DIFFERENT THAN THE FAMOUS LINE OF  
QUARTERBACKS WHO PRECEDED HIM

*By Lee Jenkins*

Photograph by  
**Donald Miralle** for Sports Illustrated

▼▼▼  
SENIOR MOMENT

Kessler threw for  
four touchdowns  
in a 55-6 rout of  
Arkansas State.











**DOWN THE** Third Street Promenade, past the violinist and the flutist, the drummer and the dancer, the painter and the mime, a cowboy named Red sings Cody Kessler's song. Red Benson has played the Promenade for almost a decade, usually perched on a stool between Starbucks and Barney's Beanery, in a white Stetson and a leather vest, the American flag at his back and a Martin guitar against his knee. Red is a 66-year-old Vietnam veteran with a snowy beard that reminds passersby of Uncle Jesse from *The Dukes of Hazard* and a soulful voice that recalls a place far from the Santa Monica Pier lit up three blocks away. "When you hear him," says Anthony Jeremiah, who patrols the Promenade as an ambassador, "you feel like you're at a campfire in the Old West."

Four years ago, after dinner at Johnny Rockets, a homesick USC freshman was lured by Red's warm lilt and longhorn belt buckle. The kid came from Bakersfield, land of Merle Haggard and Buck Owens, oil wells and almond farms, Steinbeck novels and stock car races. He was an athlete, not an Aggie, but he grew up a block from an alfalfa field where sheep provided the morning soundtrack. His father worked graveyard shifts at the state prison. His grandmother migrated from Oklahoma after the Joads. USC sat only 100 miles from Bakersfield, but it might as well have been on another planet, where students spotted the Justin boots and asked if he went cow-tipping on weekends. "I felt different," he says, "like an underdog."

He plopped down on the curb outside Johnny Rockets, nodded along to Red's country staples, and put in a request for his favorite Merle tune: "Mama Tried." He sang in unison, apparently loud enough that Red asked where he was from, and when he left the Promenade that night, Los Angeles felt a little bit smaller. He kept going back, with a buddy from Bakersfield who played baseball at Cal State Northridge, and eventually introduced himself as Cody Kessler. He always asked for "Mama Tried" and always flipped a fiver into Red's tobacco can. "I looked up to him," Kessler says, "partly because he is such a cool guy but also because he reminded me of home. I wanted him to remember me."

Last spring Kessler finally told Red that he was a USC quarterback, a startling revelation on a few levels. From Todd Marinovich to Rob Johnson, Carson Palmer to Matt Leinart, Mark Sanchez to Matt Barkley, virtually every notable USC signal-caller in the past quarter century sprouted out of the manicured Orange County suburbs. They stood between 6' 2" and 6' 5", with arms engineered for deep outs, nurtured by personal coaches and polished in seven-on-seven passing leagues. Kessler was another kind of prodigy. He was only 6' 1", and he probably needed Waze to find Newport Beach, but he threw with Clayton Kershaw control. When USC recruited him out of Centennial High School, his coach asked, "Will it be an issue

▼▼▼

#### LEADING MAN

Kessler took up the sword after pasting Notre Dame 49-14 last year, the season he reunited with Sarkisian (below, red shirt).



that he's not from Orange County?" The Trojans already had Max Wittek, a 6' 4" flamethrower from Mater Dei High, the nationally acclaimed alma mater of Leinart and Barkley.

No issue. Kessler has become a deadeye marvel for the Trojans, tossing 39 touchdowns as a junior last year with only five interceptions while setting single-season school records for completions (315), completion percentage (69.7) and interception rate (1.1%). He is a product of the analytical age, emphasizing efficiency and minimizing risk, fuming when the ball so much as touches the turf. "Post to the right hash," he grumbles, when quizzed about a rare misfire at practice, just beyond the fingertips of junior receiver Isaac Whitney. "I know exactly what you're talking about." He allows himself no more than one pick for every 100 passes and geeks out over video of Drew Brees in 2011, when the Saints' QB completed 71.2% of his throws. "Cody is frustrating to practice against," says junior linebacker Su'a Cravens, "because he doesn't make mistakes."

Kessler appreciates 40-yard fly patterns as much as the next gunslinger, but he will inform you that he





CF15 OPENING WEEK

“THIS IS  
YOUR TEAM,  
WHETHER  
YOU LIKE  
IT OR NOT,”  
ALLEN SAID.

averaged 11.2 yards on checkdown passes to running backs last season, proof that prudence doesn't have to diminish production. “He likes that stat a lot,” says offensive coordinator Clay Helton. Kessler has moved the chains for USC, through three head coaches in two years, and he has spared the defense when scholarship reductions—the result of NCAA sanctions over improper benefits—limited depth.

Red calls himself a USC fan, since his father attended the school, but he stopped following the team when it was put on probation in 2010. He had to catch up on Kessler's exploits through YouTube. Kessler is nobody's underdog anymore. He has guided the eighth-ranked Trojans back to respectability and, perhaps, of prominence. USC thrashed Arkansas State in the opener 55–6 behind four touchdowns from Kessler on 19-of-26 passing. Red, who was in Mexico visiting his girlfriend, could not catch the game but asked his son to record it. “I'll be watching now,” he says.

On the last Saturday before his senior season Kessler left a practice at the Coliseum and considered how to spend one final night of freedom. Oh, the many options available to a USC quarterback. He hopped in his 2004 GMC Sierra pickup with *The Best of Buck Owens* CD that his grandma gave him last Christmas. He planned to head up Interstate 5, through the Tehachapi Mountains and into the San Joaquin Valley, until the smell of fresh fertilizer flooded his nostrils. “Nice and pungent,” he said, faking a whiff. There was a football game at Liberty High, maybe dinner at Salty's BBQ, Sunday-morning service at Valley Baptist Church, with a sermon sure to steady him for the Heisman hype and playoff chatter to come. “Back to where it all started,” he said, to the bottom of California's bread basket, where all those newfangled farm-to-table joints are made possible. He turned on the ignition. The truck screeched. The battery was dead. Alas, so was his Saturday night.

There was no going back.

**I**N THE spring of 2007, Pete Carroll was in Bakersfield speaking at Hoffman Hospice's annual fund-raiser. Afterward, as the USC coach signed autographs and posed for pictures in a banquet room, Don Kessler piped up: “When you're recruiting, what do you look for in a quarterback?” Carroll stopped signing. “I don't care how big you are, how tall you are and how far you can throw,” he said, as if addressing a young Russell Wilson, “I look for a catchable ball.”

Don had recently retired from Wasco State Prison, where he was a corrections officer overseeing inmates, leading them to the commissary and the yard. On the 35-minute commute home he and his carpool companions listened to jazz, which smoothed the transition from guard to dad. Don's son was a basketball player, a shaggy-haired floor general with radar vision, and if there was one thing he could do, it was deliver a catchable ball. Cody preferred to drive rather than shoot, because of the two enviable outcomes that usually ensued: either he finished at the rim or drew a second defender, leaving a teammate open for a pass. He always had a choice—the layup or the kick-out—but he trusted himself to evaluate the odds and make the right one.

Cody played for a club basketball team in Redondo Beach, so at least once a week Don chauffeured him to Los Angeles, and Orange County wasn't much farther. Don called two of the area's prominent quarterback coaches. One was too expensive. The other, Steve Calhoun, invited Cody to work out at Cerritos College between basketball games. After the session Calhoun and Cody stood 15 yards apart on the field, firing footballs at each other's faces. Calhoun awarded two points for a ball at the face, one for a ball at the



CF15 OPENING WEEK

# WEEK 1 THOUGHTS

**AFTER AN OFF-SEASON** of questions about whether the SEC was still the top dog, the conference opened 12-1, including Alabama's 35-17 win over Wisconsin and Auburn's 31-24 defeat of Louisville. And Texas A&M won the SEC's lone regular-season matchup with the Pac-12, taking down the highest-ranked opponent the conference faced, No. 15 Arizona State, 38-17.... Speaking of the Pac-12, it entered the season with six Top 25 teams, but the Sun Devils' loss was matched by No. 21 Stanford's defeat at the hands of Northwestern. On a positive note UCLA and freshman quarterback Josh Rosen (*above*) looked like legit contenders. Rosen threw for 351 yards and three touchdowns in a 34-16 thrashing of Virginia.... And the Bruins weren't the only ones to find a QB. Alabama (Jake Coker), Auburn (Jeremy Johnson), Florida State (Everett Golson), Notre Dame (Malik Zaire), Oklahoma (Baker Mayfield), Ole Miss (Chad Kelly) and Oregon

(Vernon Adams) all got reaffirming debuts from their new signal-callers. Zaire dissected the Longhorns' secondary for 313 passing yards and put up the second-highest single-game completion percentage in Irish history.... Last season was hardly a banner year for the Longhorns (6-7), but they at least made the Texas Bowl on the back of a stout defense (23.8 ppg). That stinginess seems fleeting, given how nonchalantly Notre Dame picked apart Texas's D in a 38-3 rout. Neither of Charlie Strong's quarterbacks, junior Tyrone Swoopes nor freshman Jerrod Heard, showed improvement from last year while playing behind a faulty offensive line.... Saturday's Oregon-Michigan State game could be a shootout. Both team's offenses were in high gear in Week 1 wins—the Ducks beat Eastern Washington 61-42, and MSU took down Western Michigan 37-24. But they surrendered a combined 803 passing yards. Unless something changes, expect fireworks.

—Colin Becht

midsection. First to 10 was the winner. Calhoun, who played quarterback at New Mexico State and for nine years in Europe, prevailed that day. But he recognized that he had just met a 14-year-old who would soon take him down. “We changed his footwork and his mechanics,” Calhoun says. “But his accuracy never changed.”

Cody started at point guard as a freshman in high school, at quarterback as a sophomore. The Central Valley does not produce many downfield threats, so coach Bryan Nixon urged Cody to sustain drives. Kessler took Nixon's message seriously, maybe too seriously. He berated himself for interceptions, and even incompletions, compelling his father to remind him of other great quarterbacks who misfired once in a while. “He didn't want to hear it,” Don says. “He'd get so mad at himself. It ate at him.” Cody kept Calhoun late if he didn't like the spin on his spiral or if he hit an open receiver on the wrong shoulder—or the wrong side of the correct shoulder. In the Central Section championship against Bullard High rain was expected. Nixon brought wet balls to practice. “Cody flipped out,” the coach recalls. “He was so worried.” He threw for 306 yards in the Fresno muck. The next year he threw for 36 touchdowns and two interceptions.

Cody leaned toward Washington, coached by Steve Sarkisian, a former Carroll lieutenant who also prized catchable balls. Sarkisian had watched Kessler play hoops—the way he absorbed contact in the lane, the way he spotted teammates before they sprang open, the way he set up wings and let them work—and believed he'd found the ideal commander for a no-huddle offense. In the spring before his senior season, in 2010, Cody and his dad squeezed into Nixon's office at Centennial, and the coach fished Sarkisian's business card out of his drawer. Cody was committing to Washington. “Is there anybody who could change your mind?” Nixon asked.

“No,” Cody said.

“What about USC?” Don asked.

“They haven't even called,” Cody replied.

As Nixon prepared to dial Sarkisian, the phone rang. Don saw the name flash on caller ID: Clay Helton, USC. “Hey, Coach,” Helton said, when Nixon picked up. “Am I too late?”

Cody's first trip to USC, five years earlier, had been unforgettable, the 2005 epic against Fresno State, when the Trojans piled up 50 points and 508 yards to edge the Bulldogs 50-42. Cody, 12 at the time, sat in the nosebleeds above the student section in a Reggie Bush jersey. Ten years later, when asked about that game, he contorts his body to mimic Bush stopping on the sideline before reversing field for a touchdown.

“So do you want to call Sark now?” Don asked, after Nixon hung up with Helton.



"Dad," Cody said, "it's USC."

He roomed with Cody Gifford, a walk-on receiver and the son of Bakersfield legend Frank Gifford. He played country music. He went line dancing. He was a source of amusement and curiosity. "Where's that been?" then coach Lane Kiffin asked when Kessler unleashed a 70-yard heave for fun in practice. Kessler could fling it when he wanted, but where was the sense in a Hail Mary when he could so easily find Marqise Lee underneath with room to roam? As Kessler undressed in the locker room at the Sun Bowl in 2012, after Wittek played every snap of a 21-7 loss to Georgia Tech, he wondered if USC was the right choice. *Should I transfer?* Kessler, then a



freshman, thought. Before he could even consider his response, a reporter asked that very question. "No," Kessler blurted out. In the tunnel on the way to the bus he told his dad, "I'm going to win this job next year."

He became the most stable part of a turbulent program. Kiffin was famously fired at LAX following a 62-41 loss to Arizona State in September 2013. Defensive line coach Ed Orgeron was promoted, on an interim basis, only to be passed over at the end of the season; that same day Sarkisian was tabbed as the Trojans' new leader. Orgeron met with players in the morning, to say goodbye, and Sarkisian met with them in the evening, to say hello. At one point during that tumultuous '13 season former USC tailback Marcus Allen also addressed the squad and locked eyes with Kessler in the back row of the meeting room. "This is your team now, whether you like it or not," Allen said. The '13 Trojans somehow reached 10 wins.

Kessler helped bridge the gulf between Sarkisian, who replaced a father figure in Orgeron, and a damaged locker room. Last month, when Sarkisian went on his alcohol-fueled rant during the annual Salute

to Troy event, Kessler took his spot on stage at Loker Track Stadium and delivered the speech traditionally given by the head coach. The band played. The fireworks exploded. "Somebody had to do it," says a booster who was among the crowd of approximately 1,200. "In that moment he emerged as the leader. He did what he always does. He did what needed to be done."

**U**NLIKE THE main character in his favorite song, Kessler is not a rebel child, nor is he from a family meek and mild. His father scared him with enough true stories about real 21-year-olds in prison doing life without parole. Kessler's forearms are ringed with rubber bands and friendship bracelets trumpeting his many pet causes: one from a cousin who had skin cancer, one from an aunt who teaches special ed, one from a boy who died of a brain tumor, one from troops serving overseas.

In middle school Kessler asked his parents to take in a basketball teammate who had hardly anywhere else to live, and they obliged. In high school he asked the same for a football teammate. Shawn Johnson stayed in the same room as Cody's younger brother, Dylan, and graduated from Montana State last spring as the school's leading all-purpose rusher. Johnson is back in Bakersfield with Don and Christie Kessler, in the house with the USC flag out front, down the road from the alfalfa farm that's becoming a development. The sheep are gone.

On the field—and only on the field—the Trojans encourage Kessler to tap into his hometown's outlaw spirit. Last season Chargers quarterback Philip Rivers uncorked 18 interceptions, tied for the most in the NFL. Brees finished with 17, Andrew Luck 16, Peyton Manning 15. No passer wants picks, but for the most prolific they're a natural consequence. "Cody is such a conscientious person," Sarkisian says. "He wants everything right all the time." If a receiver's split is three yards off, he will call timeout. If his route is two yards short, he will look him off. Sarkisian loves that about him. "But there are times," the coach adds, "it doesn't matter if he's three yards off."

For this season to be as perfect as Kessler desires, he will have to stomach some mistakes. "We have pushed Cody to let it go a little," Sarkisian says. "There will be some failures. But you don't know how far you can get until you push yourself." Sarkisian is not advising him to fit 30-yard missiles between two defenders. He is just emphasizing that Kessler can do way more than check down. "I'm always telling him, 'Dude, let's rack up some yards!'" says sophomore receiver Juju Smith-Schuster. "I'm trying to change him, but Cody is always going to make the best decision for the team."

Kessler will never turn into some Favreian daredevil, but he acknowledges times last season when he should have launched incompletions instead of taken sacks, percentages be damned. Six preseason Top 25 teams loom on the USC schedule—Stanford, Arizona State, Notre Dame, Arizona, Oregon and UCLA—and he won't be able to manage all those games. He'll have to seize some. Then he'll head off to the NFL and hopefully buy a new pickup, while order is restored at the Coliseum. The next ballyhooed quarterback in the Trojans pipeline is freshman Sam Darnold, 6' 4" out of Orange County.

But Darnold can cool his flip-flops while a boot-stomping all-American sniper from Bakersfield takes aim at the shiny trophies. As far away as they are, four months over the horizon, he makes them look catchable. □



#### BOMB AWAY

Accurate and patient, Kessler averaged 11.2 yards per play on checkdowns in 2014, but he'll have to push deep to reach the playoff.

▼▼▼

## RUNNING FREE

Treadwell led Ole Miss with four catches in a 76-3 win over Tennessee-Martin, but he didn't score.

SPORTS ILLUSTRATED

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# LAQUON TREADWELL IS HEALED, AND THAT'S A DAMN NEAR MIRACLE

A GRUESOME INJURY LEFT OLE MISS  
AND ITS STAR RECEIVER A FEW FEET  
SHORT OF A DREAM SEASON. NOW  
HE'S BACK, LEANER AND FASTER

*By Andy Staples*

Photograph by  
**Pouya Dianat** for Sports Illustrated







**IT'S ONLY TREADWELL** on a treadmill. He isn't jogging particularly fast, but he is jogging. The Laquon Treadwell in the video is 25 pounds lighter than the 230 he weighed last season, when Ole Miss was poised to enter the College Football Playoff—until the moment Treadwell got caught from behind. “That was a long way to go,” says Treadwell of the time between those first rehab steps and where he is today. “But it was a start.” Now a junior receiver, he chose the clip as the first image of his new Instagram story because he wanted the world to see him moving again. Moving on his injured left leg and moving past that fateful night at Vaught-Hemingway Stadium.

The scenario last Nov. 1 was something Treadwell might have dreamed up playing in the yard or on the street in Crete, Ill., a quaint suburb south of Chicago. Four days earlier the playoff selection committee had released its inaugural ranking: Auburn was No. 3; Ole Miss was No. 4. The Rebels had seemingly come out of nowhere, beating Alabama, ranked No. 1 at the time, and rising to national prominence in a way they hadn't since the Archie Manning era. They had suffered their first loss the weekend before, a 10–7 defeat at LSU, but they could still crash the four-team playoff field by winning out.

Auburn's visit to Oxford was essentially an elimination game, and all the attendant desperation and excitement was reflected on the scoreboard. With 2:06 left in the third quarter the Tigers took their first lead since the opening minutes. Thirty-four seconds into the fourth, Ole Miss got the lead back. On Auburn's next possession tailback Cameron Artis-Payne scored on a six-yard run and the seesaw tilted again: Auburn 35, Ole Miss 31. With 1:39 remaining, the Rebels faced third-and-three from the Tigers' 20. Quarterback Bo Wallace tossed a bubble screen to the 6' 2" Treadwell.

He blasted through tackle attempts by defensive lineman Montravius Adams and safety Robenson Therezie. Didn't even feel them. But as Treadwell crossed the 10-yard line, he glimpsed linebacker Kris Frost closing from his right. Treadwell feared being dragged down from behind, which caused him to hesitate for a split second instead of accelerating toward the end zone. “That's what killed the whole play,” Treadwell says.





Frost grabbed Treadwell around the waist at the four and began hauling him down from behind. Planting his left foot at the one, Treadwell lunged for the goal line, but Frost tightened his grip and pulled. Treadwell's body tumbled backward over his left foot, which began sliding only after his fibula snapped and his ankle dislocated. "I felt the awkward movement," Treadwell says. "I knew I had to let the ball go to actually save myself."

The ball and the Rebels' playoff hopes bounced off Frost's leg and landed in the end zone, where Auburn linebacker Cassanova McKinzy recovered. "I knew it was a wrap. I just lay there. I couldn't even believe it," Treadwell says. "Thinking you're going to the playoffs, making the game-winning touchdown. Everything I ever wanted. The thing that hurt me the most was I knew I had to wait a whole year or two or whatever to get back on the field."

Treadwell's season had ended with 48 catches for 632 yards and five touchdowns. He went off the field on a stretcher and spent the game's final seconds in the training room beneath the stadium. He told family and friends he was fine. He was not. When the final whistle blew and Ole Miss had lost, he cried. Then an ambulance took him to the hospital, where a doctor placed a mask over his face. "This will help you breathe," Treadwell recalls the doctor saying. When Treadwell woke, he had a cast on his surgically repaired leg and months of rehab ahead.

**WORKING THE BRAKE** and the gas pedal with his left foot was weird and "not safe at all," but Ole Miss linebacker Denzel Nkemdiche knew he had to do it anyway. A week before Treadwell's gruesome moment against Auburn, Nkemdiche broke his right ankle at LSU. It had led to a lonely week for Nkemdiche, watching his teammates prepare for the Tigers. He didn't want Treadwell to feel the same sense of isolation, so as soon as Treadwell could receive visitors, Nkemdiche drove to the hospital.

Sitting amid the gurneys and plastic food trays and shuffling nurses, the teammates promised each other they would come back—better. "We made an oath, a bond," says Nkemdiche, a senior from Loganville, Ga. "We're in this."

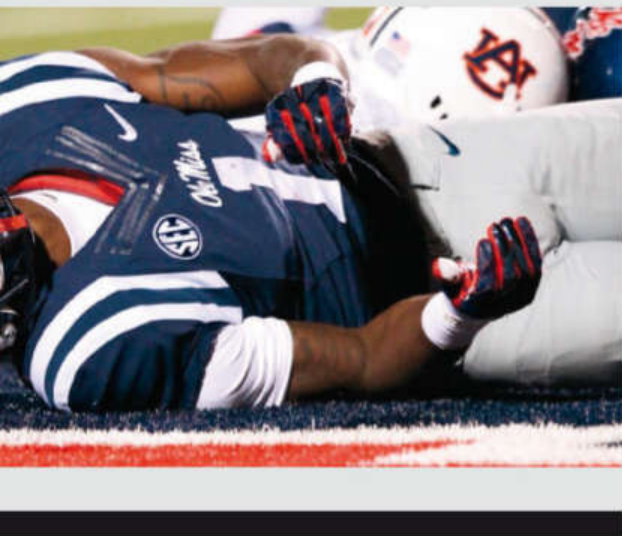
In the ensuing weeks Nkemdiche and Treadwell nicknamed themselves the Scooter Gang. Their injured legs rested on pads while their working legs propelled wheeled contraptions around campus. The duo milked the spectacle for all it was worth. The sorority house lunches, during which fellow students doted on the less-than-mobile players, were the best.



### ROLL BACK

The tackle left Treadwell writhing, but he returned last week (above, in red) and showed no lingering effects on the field.





CF15 OPENING WEEK

# “IT’S THE WORST I EVER FELT,” SAYS TREADWELL.

Having Treadwell in a similar predicament “made it easy and fun,” says Nkemdiche. “I look back on it now, and it wasn’t a bad time in my life.”

One of the most popular players on the team, Treadwell is also quick to engage fans and fellow students, who know him for his big smile. But the injury undermined his bright attitude. At first he took the pain pills doctors prescribed, but he stopped after a couple of weeks. “I wanted to feel the pain,” Treadwell says. “I would try to sleep through it just to motivate myself.” Sometimes he’d scroll through his phone or text friends at 3 a.m., but mostly he suffered. “It’s like a fire on your foot. It’s the worst feeling I’ve ever felt,” Treadwell says. “It was torture, really. I would just have to sit there and scream, do whatever to get my mind off of it.”

Treadwell doesn’t remember the first night he fell asleep easily, only the relief of knowing he had beaten the pain with as little pharmaceutical intervention as possible. By January, he could run on an antigravity

treadmill, and by February he and Nkemdiche were running in the Rebels’ indoor practice facility, Treadwell trying to keep up with his teammate. “I like to get a feel for things first,” Treadwell says. “He’d just go and do it and have no thoughts about it.”

Though coach Hugh Freeze had no intention of letting Treadwell risk a setback during spring practice, it was obvious the receiver would be ready for the 2015 opener. In some ways Treadwell felt better than ever. He weighed 210 pounds and had 7% body fat, down from 11%. “I’ve always been telling him he needs to lose some weight,” receivers coach Grant Heard says. “I didn’t think he’d lose that much.”

In other ways, though, Treadwell felt strange. The injury and subsequent one-legged period made walking and running on two legs feel odd. Treadwell had to relearn skills that had originally been instinctive. “Everything is still new to me,” he says. “Like the first day I could cut, it was like a newborn baby walking.”

**J** AMES LOFTON wasn’t sure what to expect from Treadwell. The Hall of Famer watched Treadwell’s highlights and saw a 225-pounder outmuscling corners on back-shoulder fades or trying to drag tacklers on bubble screens. “There’s not much of a route tree there,” Lofton says.

The Treadwell who arrived in San Diego to take a wide receiver master class with Lofton in May was much leaner. “He looked like he had gone from a 4.5 to 4.35,” Lofton says. Still, Lofton wasn’t sure how Treadwell would respond to running more sophisticated and precise routes. Lofton, who coached receivers for the Chargers and the Raiders, considers Keenan McCardell the best route runner he ever tutored. McCardell, who played in the NFL for 16 years at 6’ 1” and 190 pounds, had to run perfect routes to get open. Treadwell could get away with sloppy ones in college because of his size and strength. But as they practiced, Lofton marveled at how quickly Treadwell absorbed details. When Lofton asked for a break at 12 yards, Treadwell hit the precise mark. Lofton asked for 14½ yards on the next rep; Treadwell planted on the spot. “He had that lightness on his feet that Keenan had—and still the power,” Lofton says. “Everything that I said to do, he could do without demonstration.”

Learning to walk and run again had forced Treadwell to pay closer attention to his footwork at the line of scrimmage and to the crispness of his breaks; Lofton was refining and codifying those lessons. “That’s where your craft comes in,” Treadwell says. A consensus five-star recruit and the No. 1 receiver prospect in the class of 2013, Treadwell also realized that while he had always put in the effort, he would sometimes sweat for the sake of sweating. “I really got the mental side of it,” he says. “It’s not just working hard. It’s knowing what you’re working on and working for a purpose.” Given that perspective, the injury could prove to be a blessing. “In the long run,” Heard says, “I think it’s going to be better for him.”

**F** REEZE WAS on his way to the SEC’s spring meetings in Destin, Fla., at the end of May when he saw the video. Treadwell bounced on a friend’s trampoline, flipping and twisting for the camera. When the clip hit Instagram, Rebels fans got excited. Their team’s star receiver, who was a little less than seven months removed from a gruesome injury, looked healthy and at ease every time he landed. Freeze was not quite as excited by the clip: “That made me cringe a little bit.”

# KEY TO SUCCESS



Back in 1994, when Urban Meyer was the wide receivers coach at Colorado State, he went after a junior college wideout named Keyshawn Johnson. “We had a few conversations,” says Johnson. “It didn’t lead to much, but I was nice to him.” Johnson chose USC, but a generation later Meyer is back in the Johnson family business, and it’s paying off.

Johnson’s nephew Michael Thomas is a 6’3”, 210-pound junior receiver at Ohio State who’s projected as an early-round NFL talent. (He also has a pinch of the family flair as indicated by his Twitter handle: @cantguardmike.) Thomas bloomed late, only developing as an FBS recruit after a senior season in which he led the state with 1,656 yards receiving for Woodland Hills Taft in San Fernando Valley, Calif., in 2010. Uncle Keyshawn worked the phones to get his nephew noticed by premier Pac-12 schools, but USC, Cal and Washington all passed. “I told them, ‘Either I’m stupid or I’m dumb,’” Johnson

says. “‘I don’t know what you all are seeing.’”

Thomas instead went to Fork Union (Va.) Military Academy, a prep school, where he caught balls from future Buckeyes quarterback Cardale Jones. He followed Jones to Columbus, playing limited snaps as a freshman and redshirting his sophomore year. Everything clicked last season, when Thomas led the team with 54 catches, emerging as a technical route runner with sure hands.

Thomas’s highlight moment came when he hauled in a 13-yard touchdown pass from receiver Evan Spencer on a trick play in the waning seconds of the first half of the College Football Playoff semifinal against Alabama. Tide offensive coordinator Lane Kiffin, who passed on Thomas as USC’s coach, heard more about it later. “‘See,’” Johnson says he told Kiffin a few days after the game, “‘you would still have your job at USC if you’d have listened.’”

—Pete Thamel

“The trampoline,” Treadwell says, “was another step.” Just as he had to prove to himself he could sprint or cut before he felt comfortable, he had to show that he could take a physical risk and move without fear.

That didn’t seem a sure thing when Ole Miss players began postspring workouts in April. Former Rebels and current Colts receiver Donte Moncrief encouraged his former teammates to jump rope to help their quickness, and Treadwell struggled to find a rhythm. Eventually he did. And when he wiped out during an agility drill and his teammates responded not with gasps but with laughter, he knew he was back.

One summer day a high school defensive back visiting for a camp boasted he could cover Treadwell. As they lined up, the kid told his friend to post footage of his lockdown coverage on Snapchat. “I didn’t even give him a chance,” Treadwell says. He knows the cornerbacks from Alabama, LSU, Auburn, Mississippi State and the rest of the SEC will pose a far greater challenge. But he’s confident he can test them even more than he did during his sophomore campaign.

At his previous size Treadwell was ideal for the packaged plays Freeze loves. Those allow the quarterback to decide whether to hand off or throw postsnap. When defenses shifted one safety into the box to account for the run, they often left Treadwell one-on-one with a defender he could overpower. “If they roll one-high [to a single deep safety], he doesn’t have to beat them real bad to have a chance, because he’s so strong and physical,” Freeze says. “He’ll be one-on-one with good DBs, and they can go shoulder-to-shoulder, and he’ll make the catch.”

Still, Treadwell estimates he’ll be “three times better” than he was last year because he has added speed and technique without sacrificing power. In the opener, a 76–3 drubbing of Tennessee-Martin, Treadwell caught four balls for 44 yards, although he also had a drop that led to an interception. The numbers were modest among the offensive onslaught, but he moved well and showed off his new speed on a 15-yard catch. Heard sees no reason to place a limit on his potential: “He can be as good as he wants to be.”

Some Saturday soon Treadwell will catch another pass and turn toward the end zone. Maybe he’ll remember the yank and the snap that ended last season. Maybe he’ll block it out, focus only on the goal line and finish the journey he started in the final minutes of the Auburn game.

And after he does, he’ll probably post a shot of the scoreboard on Instagram. From the slow jog on the treadmill to the celebration on the happier side of the goal line, another chapter will be complete. □



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**+ SHOW THE WAY, JOSÉ**  
Bautista wanted a less  
passive clubhouse. He  
got it, which in turn has  
produced near-nightly  
electricity, and a near-50%  
attendance spike, at home.



A ACURA

MLB

# V-JAY DAY

**BY TOM VERDUCCI**

Photograph by **Tim Clayton** for Sports Illustrated





The place the expanded post-season forgot is a hothouse of excitement. In Toronto, where the last playoff game was played before the existence of the DVD, provincial homeboy Justin Bieber and baseball wild cards, September is meaningful for the first time since 1993. With their team locked in an American League East battle with the Yankees, a new generation of Blue Jays fans is discovering that nothing pleases and pains the sports psyche like the twists of a September baseball race.

Until Blue Jays general manager Alex Anthopoulos went on a four-day shopping binge at the end of July, in which he traded 11 prospects and a starting shortstop (José Reyes) for shortstop Troy Tulowitzki, outfielder Ben Revere and pitchers David Price, LaTroy Hawkins and Mark Lowe, Toronto was a 50–50 team averaging 28,700 fans at Rogers Centre. After the extreme makeover the Blue Jays ripped off the best 33-game run in franchise history (26–7), which included suddenly delirious home crowds that averaged more than 42,000.

It took Price just one home start in Rogers Centre to declare, “That was the best atmosphere I’ve ever been in.” It was high praise from someone who has pitched in a wild-card tiebreaker game in Texas, a Division Series game in Boston, a championship-series Game 7 in St. Petersburg and a World Series game in Philadelphia.

The Blue Jays are cribbing from the novella of the 2014 Royals, a team that also was 50–50 while sitting on the longest playoff drought in baseball before tapping into the energy of a late-season run to storm all the way to Game 7 of the World Series. The AL East title is likely to come down to the seven games Toronto plays against

New York, starting Thursday in the Bronx. If an intangible edge exists, it would fall to the Blue Jays on the merit of momentum.

“The Blue Jays will win the division because they’re the better, hotter team right now,” says one AL manager. “It’s a different team. Those guys in Toronto are hungry and riding high. Guys like [José] Bautista and [Edwin] Encarnación weren’t happy with some of the low-key players they’ve had in the past. Now they’ve brought in a lot of high-energy guys, and it’s bringing out the best in them. They’re playing like they feel they’re unstoppable.”

The 34-year-old Bautista, with 279 career home runs, and the 32-year-old Encarnación, with 259, rank one-two among active players for most dingers without ever playing in the postseason. Bautista, Encarnación and third baseman Josh Donaldson have combined for 99 home runs on what is, by a long shot, the best offense in baseball. The Jays could become only the 14th team with three players to hit at least 35 home runs. (One caveat: None of the previous 13, including the last to do so, the 2006 White Sox, ever won a postseason series.)

The power of the Yankees, meanwhile, has waned. New York built a five-game lead (six over the Jays) entering August largely because Mark Teixeira, 35, and Alex Rodriguez, 40, unexpectedly provided 52 home runs and 134 RBIs. But then the old sluggers either broke down (Teixeira will miss much of September with a deep bone bruise on his shin) or wore down. At week’s end they had hit just .173 with seven homers since Aug. 1.

Rodriguez has played 115 calendar months in his career in which he has had at least 10 at bats. His .153 average in August, according to the Elias Sports Bureau, was the worst of those 115 months.

“I wore down,” Rodriguez admitted as September began. “[People] said before the season if I had as many at bats as I have already it would be a miracle. I mean, I’m on a pace for 600 plate appearances. It’s been a long, long time since I’ve done that. [Not since 2007, in fact.] My body’s not used to it. But right now I feel good. I feel like the cooler weather in September will be good for me.”

(The Yankees, having led by as many as seven games in July, are treading into their own unfamiliar territory. The franchise has never has blown a lead larger than the six-game margin it held in June 1933.)

The AL East race, with its seven mano-a-mano matchups still to come, is the highlight of baseball’s closing chapter of the regular season. It is just one of several tantalizing September story lines.

VICTORY HAS NOT BEEN CLOSER AT HAND IN  
TORONTO FOR MORE THAN TWO DECADES, AND  
THE ONLY SOUND LOUDER THAN THE **BUZZ IN**  
**ROGERS CENTRE** IS THE COLLECTIVE THUNDER  
OF THE GAME’S MOST MENACING LINEUP.  
WELCOME BACK TO SEPTEMBER, TORONTO  
(AND QUEENS, AND HOUSTON AND CHICAGO. . . )



## THE LOOMING NATIONALS DISASTER

The most heavily favored team to win its division threatens to become the biggest bust. After holding a 4½-game lead on July 5, Washington fell into a 25–29 malaise characterized by poor defense, poor situational hitting and poor pitching, compounded by the curious bullpen usage of manager Matt Williams.

In 2012 the Nationals won 98 games with an entire rotation, its closer and five of their eight everyday players 28 or younger. The future looked so bright that the playoff-bound Nats even shut down healthy, postoperative ace Stephen Strasburg as a preventative measure and as an investment in future postseason runs. But Washington still hasn't won a playoff series, and the direction of the team may be altered depending on what happens this month. Washington has seven potential free agents, including pitchers Jordan Zimmermann and Doug Fister, shortstop Ian Desmond and centerfielder Denard Span, and a manager who is on the hot seat.

"It's to the point where you wonder if their window has closed," says a rival GM. "The Padres and Rays actually bailed them out with the [off-season] three-way trade. They got [pitcher] Joe Ross and [shortstop] Trea Turner. I still don't get that one from San Diego's and Tampa's perspective. Without those two players, Washington would really be in trouble."

The Nationals do have a favorable schedule to make a run. Of their final 30 games, 24 are against losing teams and six are against the team they are chasing, the Mets.



Check out SI's stretch-drive Strike Zone podcast with Stephen Cannella and Ted Keith at [SI.com/podcasts](http://SI.com/podcasts)



## Bryce Is Right

Can you win MVP for an also-ran team in an era when one-third of the teams make the playoffs? It hasn't happened yet in the small sample of baseball's three-year-old second wild-card era. And going further back, each of the past 16 MVPs has come from a playoff team. If voters continue to lean toward choosing players who help their teams reach the postseason, pitcher Zack Greinke (Dodgers), centerfielder Andrew McCutchen (Pirates)

and first baseman Anthony Rizzo (Cubs) are the leading NL candidates, along with catcher Buster Posey, if his Giants rally for a playoff spot.

Bryce Harper's season, though, may be too extraordinary to hold Washington's troubles against him. He is in position to win the "percentage triple crown" (he leads in batting average, on-base percentage and slugging percentage).

A strong finishing kick would cement the award for Harper, 22, who would be younger

than every MVP at the end of their award-winning season except Vida Blue (1971), Johnny Bench ('70) and Stan Musial ('43). Harper already has combined power and patience in historic proportions for such a young hitter. On Sept. 1, Harper became the youngest in more than half a century to hit 30 homers while drawing 100 walks. Only four other hitters also reached those thresholds in their age-22 or younger season: Eddie Mathews ('54), Ted Williams ('39 and '41), Mel Ott ('29) and Jimmie Foxx ('29)—all Hall of Famers.





## PUSHING THE LIMIT

Scott Boras, the agent for Mets ace Matt Harvey, created a controversy last week by saying that Harvey's surgeon, James Andrews, advised against Harvey's pitching more than 180 innings in his first year back from Tommy John surgery. Through Sunday the 26-year-old righthander had thrown 166½ innings, which under his agent's plan would make him unavailable for the postseason. Boras told the MLB Network that if Harvey exceeds 180, the Mets "are obviously putting the player in peril."

Boras cited four pitchers who threw 200 innings for the first time in the season after having Tommy John surgery and faced further injury, but none are a perfect comparison for the 6' 4", 215-pound Harvey, who had more than 19 months between major league appearances, an exceptionally long rehab. Pitching coach Dan Warthen told SI two months ago that the Mets scheduled Harvey to throw "in the 190 to 195" inning range during the regular season. Only in August did Boras question the team about Harvey's innings.

An uncomfortable Harvey dodged questions last Saturday, only to respond on Sunday in the face of heavy criticism from fans and media by writing for *The Players' Tribune*, "There has never been a doubt in my mind: I will pitch in the playoffs."



Matt Harvey

# The Gift-Wrapped MVP?

It ranked as one of the most baffling trades of the off-season and only looks more curious today: On Nov. 28, 2014, Oakland general manager Billy Beane traded one of the best players in baseball, who had four more years under team control, including this season at the bargain rate of \$4.3 million. The idea of trading Josh Donaldson to Toronto was such a bad one that Beane himself repeatedly told a persistent Alex Anthopoulos that Donaldson was not available. As ranked by wins above replacement (WAR) among batters, only Mike Trout was better than Donaldson, then 28, over the previous two seasons.



Josh Donaldson

But after weeks of calls from Anthopoulos, including one in which the Toronto GM added major league third baseman Brett Lawrie to a package of prospects, Beane reversed himself. The Oakland GM explained in a conference call on the night of the trade that he had to make a move that "wasn't timid and got us into a position to get better every day rather than maybe starting to deteriorate."

The Athletics are on pace to deteriorate

by 18 wins this year. Donaldson has continued the upward trajectory of his career. He leads the AL in WAR, runs, total bases, extra-base hits and runs batted in. He could join Alex Rodriguez (2005 and '07) and Al Rosen (1953) as the only third basemen to hit 40 home runs while leading the league in runs. Rodriguez and Rosen won the MVP award in those years. Donaldson has gained an edge for this year's AL award on Trout, who could still win it again with a big finish.

Should Donaldson win the award, Beane would become the first general manager in 43 years to trade a hitter who would go on to win the MVP the following season. The last to do so was Dodgers GM Al Campanis, who in 1971 traded first baseman Dick Allen to the White Sox to acquire pitcher Tommy John.



## THE FIRST TRUE FINISH LINE

ALL 15 GAMES ON THE FINAL DAY OF THE SEASON (RIGHT), OCT. 4, BEGIN AT 3 P.M. EASTERN TIME. No longer will there be games that could be rendered moot by the outcome of earlier games. For instance, the Blue Jays, Yankees, Astros, Rangers, Twins and Angels—all jostling for one of the four AL playoff spots to join runaway Central-leading Kansas City—will be involved in five simultaneous games in three time zones. That change by Major League Baseball hopes to create more of the best part of pennant-race baseball: organized chaos. □

## Rockies at Giants Angels at Rangers

Marlins at Phillies

Reds at Pirates

Yankees at Orioles

Cardinals at Braves

Athletics at Mariners

Padres at Dodgers

Astros at D-Backs

Royals at Twins

Tigers at White Sox

Red Sox at Indians

Nationals at Mets

Blue Jays at Rays

Cubs at Brewers

# SUZY'S SECRET LIFE

**BY SUZY FAVOR HAMILTON**

*with Sarah Tomlinson*

*How did Suzy Favor Hamilton go from running in the Olympics to working as a highly paid escort in Las Vegas? The answers lie in a troubled family past, the competitiveness of an elite athlete, and an undiagnosed mental illness*

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Photograph by  
**MICHAEL STEELE**  
Getty Images





+

#### RUNNING SCARED

Hamilton ran well in the 1,500-meter heats in Sydney but felt spent going into the final.

# I was SHAKI still riding the rush.



**THE APPOINTMENT I'D JUST LEFT WAS IN ONE OF THE FANCIEST HOTEL SUITES IN LAS VEGAS.**

My body was still glowing with pleasure. This is way better than winning a race, I thought. This is better than competing in the Olympics. If I'd known how amazing this felt, I never would have wasted all that time.

My old life with my parents and husband and daughter still waited for me in Wisconsin, but I went home less and less. I was Kelly now, one of the most sought-after escorts in Vegas. Suzy, the former professional athlete, the Realtor, the wife, the mom—she had disappeared.

I flashed back to the luxurious penthouse suite where I'd spent the past two hours. It had been my first appointment with this handsome client, but I'd walked in and given him a kiss straightaway, letting my mouth linger on his. I wanted him to imagine I'd been aching to see him all day. I'd taken him to the

bed, showing him that I was the one in charge. He'd liked it. Ceding control turned him on, in contrast to his daily life as the CEO of a major corporation.

I had earned \$1,200 doing something I loved. I thought of my next appointment, later that night. By then I'd be buzzing even more, telegraphing that I was the kind of wild girl who could make his dreams come true.

Now that I'd devoted myself to sex, my need to be unsurpassed in the bedroom had replaced the need to be best on the track. But this was even better, because I'd hated the competition necessary to win a race. Everything about being an escort was enjoyable. I didn't want to go back to my old life. Not ever.

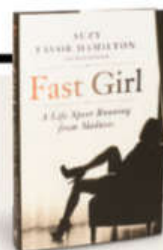
**AS A CHILD** I had a very active imagination, which made it nearly impossible for me to concentrate on reading or school. I had to be moving. If I was still, anxiety and self-doubt crept into my head.

My family—my parents, older brother, two older sisters and I—lived near a small ski hill in Stevens Point, Wis. My brother, Dan, raced competitively. He loved the speed and the adrenaline rush, and he chased the thrill of dangerous activities. The older he got, the more erratic his behavior became.

When Dan's high school girlfriend died of a rare condition, Reye's syndrome, he was devastated. His mood swings and aggressive behavior worsened. He was finally diagnosed with bipolar disorder and given shock treatment and lithium. After the treatment he self-medicated with liquor. One day when I was 12 and he was 18, my mom and I found him passed out,

## EXCERPTED FROM

FAST GIRL: A Life Spent Running from Madness, by Suzy Favor Hamilton with Sarah Tomlinson. Copyright © 2015 by Suzy Favor Hamilton. To be published on Sept. 14 by Dey Street Books, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers.







## ALWAYS MOVING

The unkind headlines behind her, Hamilton (in California) now runs for love, health and mental equilibrium.

clutching an empty vodka bottle. Another time my dad found Dan, drunk, pointing a shotgun at his head.

No one in my family talked about these anguishing scenes, and a shadow crept over our house. To me, ours was a family of secret pain. I wanted to make up for it. I decided to be perfect.

**WHEN I DISCOVERED RUNNING,** I loved that it was so pure, just my body and me. By the time I joined my middle school track squad, in seventh grade, I was so much faster than the other girls that our coach had me run with the boys' team. But I was already faster than most of the boys, too.

I didn't like being singled out like that, and track practice became anxiety-inducing. I wanted to win, but I hated not being able to blend in.

The accolades that came with track made my parents proud. I saw that I could distract them from their stress and fears about Dan. But that made me feel more pressure to win. My freshman year at Stevens Point Area Senior High, I won the mile and two-mile races at the statewide meet. I was miserable. I thought, Now I have to win every state meet. If I were to lose, I'd let everyone down.

Feeling out of control, I found one thing over which I did have power: what I ate. Or how *little* I ate. Between the minuscule amount of food I was eating and the excessive training, my body was starving itself. But I was running faster. Still, with all my training, starving myself wasn't sustainable, so I became bulimic. I would binge on a tray of brownies or a bunch of pasta and then purge.

The bulimia was full blown by the time I started college, at Wisconsin, in 1986. No matter how skinny I was, I always felt heavy, especially because I didn't have what I thought of as the perfect running body. I did everything to hide my large breasts, ordering a team shirt that was too large and altering it to hang even more loosely on me. My shame turned to rage later in my college career when I learned that a coach of the men's track team had shown his runners video of my breasts bouncing as I ran. In 1993, I would secretly pay \$8,000 for breast-reduction surgery.

**IN JANUARY** of my freshman year a friend fixed me up with one of his baseball teammates, a freshman pitcher from California, Mark Hamilton. He looked like Val Kilmer in *Top Gun*, with that same flattop. I thought he was gorgeous.

Mark was open-minded and wanted to talk about everything. Although he never asked me about my bulimia, he gently urged me to eat when we were together, and he noticed when I'd skip a meal. Eventually I opened up to him. With his support I stopped purging and adopted a more balanced diet.

On the track, meanwhile, I worked with Peter Tegen, the greatest coach I would ever have. He knew it was important for his runners to compete against international athletes early to have a shot at the Olympics. He persuaded the university to pay for the team to travel to Europe and race in the summers. There I saw I could hold my own against the world's best runners. Back in college I won every national track championship I entered—nine in all, at the time the most NCAA titles for any athlete.

In January of my senior year I signed a six-figure, five-year contract with Reebok. A week after Mark

and I graduated, we got married. We moved from Madison to Malibu. Mark would attend Pepperdine's law school while I trained for the 1992 Olympics.

In the 1,500-meter final at the U.S. trials I edged my childhood idol, Mary Decker Slaney, to finish third and qualify for Barcelona. My parents were overjoyed. Signs went up all over my hometown, cheering me on to the Olympics. The expectations turned my euphoria into the greatest anxiety of my racing life.

By the night before my 1,500 preliminary in Barcelona, I was back in the dark, negative head space that often plagued me during competition. Not only that, but the Olympic Village was a chaos of loud music, drunken shouts and laughter. I lay in bed seeing myself fail again and again. I don't think I slept at all. I would rather have done anything but run an Olympic race.

I could barely focus as I took my position. And then I started to run. I didn't feel like I belonged among these elite athletes. I tightened up with a lap and a half to go, living the nightmare of many runners: I felt as if I were dragging my arms and legs through quicksand. The other racers flew past. I finished last.

*At the 1996 Games, Suzy ran the 800 meters and failed to make the final. She and Mark moved back to Madison, and she continued to run professionally. Then, in '99, Dan FAVOR died by suicide.*

**THE SHADOW OF DAN** fell over an already high-stakes year for me. I was 32 in 2000, and it would be my third Olympics. I felt as if I had to finally make good on all the sacrifices that Mark, my parents and my coaches had made for so many years.

I came in second in the 1,500 meters at the U.S. trials. I was running great—too great. I peaked in Oslo just after the trials, running the 1,500 in 3:57, a couple of tenths of a second off Slaney's U.S. record. That established me as the favorite in Sydney. But in the Olympic semifinals I ran second and felt terrible, as if I were already spent. Before the final I wanted to flee.

I was assigned to be the first runner, closest to the inside rail. This meant I had to get off to a fast start to avoid getting boxed in. My heart felt as if it would pound itself to dust. When the gun went off, my newly sharpened spikes gripped the track. Running in sheer panic, I pushed my way into [the lead], but with every stride my only thought was, I just want this nightmare to be over.

With one lap to go the exhalations of the runners behind me grew louder, making me feel as if I were being hunted like an animal. My legs grew heavy, and with 150 meters left the other runners passed me one by one. I was going to come in last, in my last



Olympic race. No gold for Mark, for Coach Tegen, for my parents, for my brother's memory. Heartbroken, I told myself to fall, and then I fell.

I felt like an idiot, but at least I didn't have to run anymore. Then I realized I couldn't leave this race unfinished. I made myself get up and cross the line, but when the media crowded around me, I couldn't bear the shame and collapsed again. I closed my eyes and felt the medics lift me into the air.

*Suzy and Mark had a daughter, Kylie, in 2005 and began working together in real estate. Suzy suffered from postpartum depression and often felt consumed by anxiety, which placed stress on her marriage.*

**BY MARCH 2007**, I was barely holding it together. As soon as Mark left for the office in the morning, I fell apart. I rocked back and forth, unable to stop. It's all too much, I thought. I have this child. I have this job. I hate real estate. I don't get along with my husband. I want it all to end.

Driving home from an appointment with a client one night, I gripped the steering wheel and prepared to drive off the road and into a tree. I was just at the point of no return, pressing the gas pedal hard, when I thought, What if it doesn't work? I can't be in a hospital bed for the rest of my life. Kylie's face kept rising from the chaos in my mind, reminding me that I had something important to live for. I was wrung out by the time I parked in front of the house. I was in a fog that whole night. Mark asked, "What is with you, Suzy?"

"Well, I almost killed myself tonight," I said.



## OLYMPIC TRAVAILS

Hamilton (3838) ran poorly in the 800 in Atlanta (top) and, with leaden legs, came in last in her 1,500-meter preliminary in Barcelona (above).





Q/A

## BACK FROM THE BRINK

INTERVIEW  
BY MAGGIE GRAY

**SPORTS ILLUSTRATED:**

How closely was your medical condition linked to your risky behavior?

**SUZY FAVOR HAMILTON:**

The risky behavior was because of the bipolar disorder and because of [the antidepressant I was taking]. If you Google *bipolar*, you'll see that two of its characteristics are risky sex and hypersexuality. The [antidepressant] brought on the hypersexuality, and the bipolar condition made it completely out of control. I was delusional. I couldn't see that what I was doing was wrong.

**SI:** Your husband has been very supportive and stuck by you. Why do you think he supported your choice to be an escort?

**SFH:** He definitely didn't support it. He was trying desperately to get me out. But he also enabled me. He didn't know who to turn to. As hard as he pushed, there was no way I could leave [escorting]. I was the happiest I had ever been. Looking back, he even told me he [preferred] the manic Suzy [to] the depressed Suzy. I was easier to deal with. Obviously in my mind he is the hero because

he could so easily have taken my daughter and deserted me.

**SI:** Have you decided what you are going to tell your daughter about your life as an escort?

**SFH:** We have already educated her, with help from psychologists and a sexual therapist who deals with children. First of all [we told her] that her mommy's mind wasn't working right. She knows exactly what I did in Vegas. And she understands that that behavior was part of the illness. She's nine now. Kids know so much more than we think they know [about] sex. She's adapted to it and looks at [my behavior with] understanding and compassion. She's not focused on the sex.

**SI:** If you hadn't gotten caught, would you still be an escort?

**SFH:** Absolutely. It fed my mania. I would most likely be dead, though, and wouldn't be able to tell this story to help others. I've cried in so many interviews about the pain I've caused so many people, and that's the worst part of dealing with all this. I hope the book won't cause more pain to my loved ones, but I feel it's necessary to tell this story because there are so many people silently suffering, [unable to] speak out because of the stigma [of bipolar condition] or the fear of losing a loved one or a job. It's time that we as a society look at bipolar condition in a serious manner, and I believe we are starting to do that. □

Mark immediately softened. He hugged me. "I want you to call the doctor," he said. "And if you don't, I'm calling for you."

*After Suzy went on antidepressants, she and Mark decided to take a trip to celebrate their 20th anniversary.*

**ISAID TO MARK:** "Let's go to Vegas." I'd come up with what I considered a wild anniversary celebration. "First, I think we should go skydiving," I said. "And then"—I paused for drama—"I was thinking, maybe we could hire an escort and have a threesome like we've always talked about."

Mark knew I'd always felt some attraction to women, although I'd been only with him. "Yeah . . . O.K.," he said, grinning.

I was beside myself with excitement as we pulled up at the airfield. We were doing a tandem jump, which meant we'd each have an instructor strapped to our backs. In the plane we reached our jumping altitude, and in a flash I was falling through the air. Inside, though, I was soaring. It was the most powerful rush possible. I could see all the way to Lake Mead, 30 miles away. It was spectacular. I whooped with joy.

I was giddy with endorphins from skydiving when we got back to our hotel room just after six o'clock. At exactly 7 p.m. there was a knock on our door. Our escort, Pearl, strolled in looking happy and relaxed, as if she'd known us forever. She was beautiful; there was a golden glow about her. She sat down close to me on the couch. "Is this your first time in Vegas?" she asked, flirtatiously indicating there was more to that question.

"We love Vegas," I said. "We've been here a few times now."

"And what's the occasion for this trip?" she asked.

"It's our 20th wedding anniversary," Mark said.

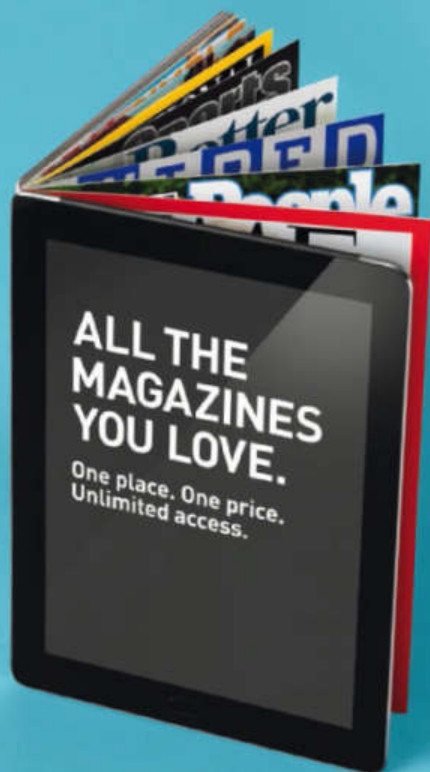
"No," she teased. "You don't look old enough."

My nerves evaporated. I really liked this woman. She looked at me with real warmth. And then, still holding my gaze, she slowly stood up. "Shall we?" she asked.

As Pearl moved things along in the bedroom, she seemed sweet and classy, and I felt myself connecting with her. I also felt closer to Mark than I had in a long time.

*Suzy returned to Vegas alone several times with the reluctant acquiescence of Mark, who urged her to be discreet.*

**THE ROCK 'N' ROLL MARATHON** asked me to take part in its events in Las Vegas on Dec. 3 and 4, 2011. They flew Mark out as well. I arranged to meet with Bridget, our contact at the high-end escort



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screening service that had set up our threesome. Pearl had flipped a switch inside me, awakening a certainty that I could please clients even more than she'd pleased me. I told Mark that because the service did a background check on all its clients, becoming an escort was the best way to ensure that no one ever found out about my double life. And I said I had to do this if I was going to be happy. Somehow he agreed.

I wanted to have occasional trysts, with just a couple of Bridget's highest-rolling, most discreet clients. When she asked me why, I said, "Well, I was a professional runner for many years. It could be very damaging to my reputation if anyone found out I was sleeping with a man who wasn't my husband."

The next day, a few hours before I was due to run the Rock 'n' Roll Marathon's first Stiletto Dash, my throwaway phone buzzed. "Can you make an appointment in an hour?" Bridget said.

The next thing I knew I was in our hotel room, scrambling to get ready. "Mark, you have to take me to [the client's hotel]," I said. "I don't know where it is." He looked up at me for a long moment, sighed and then explained how to get there. I thanked him and gave him a kiss goodbye. I left my husband of more than 20 years and went to have sex with a stranger for money.

I was Kelly now. This was the name I had chosen, but it was more than that. Kelly was my new personality: a confident, powerful woman who made her own decisions.

**MY CLIENT** on my next trip to Vegas was a good-looking, very wealthy Midwestern corn farmer, Bob, who was in his mid-60s. He had silver-gray hair and a confident, seductive air. "Have you ever been to Denver?" he asked me over drinks.

"Oh, sure," I said. "I've been all over the West and Midwest. I went to the University of Wisconsin."

I was too new at escorting to know that the men coveted information about the girls they saw. And I hadn't yet learned to be careful with my words. I wanted to feel my clients and I were friends; that connection was a huge part



## **PILLAR OF STRENGTH**

Mark supported Suzy from their wedding day through her struggle with mental illness.

of the turn-on. Later that night, without thinking, I referred to myself as Suzy. I hoped he had not caught it.

"I want to see you again," Bob said. I loved the fact that I already had regulars, and I was excited to see Bob on another visit to Vegas. When I walked into his suite, though, he dropped a bombshell. "I know who you are," he said. "You're Suzy Favor Hamilton when you're home in Wisconsin."

Mark had warned me that this would happen, but I wasn't worried. "I'll never tell anybody," Bob said. "Now let's go get you some new lingerie."

Having men spend money on me was a thrill. From a young age I'd been told I was destined for greatness, and I had chased that dream on the track. Now, as Kelly, I was looking to be No. 1 again. I became obsessed with the rankings that clients gave escorts on the website Erotic Review. I thought of regulars from whom I could receive 10s, and I went the extra mile for new clients so they would write me positive reviews.

Fortunately I had a wonderful husband at home covering for me. He got Kylie up and off to school, devoted himself to our business during a nonstop workday, took Kylie to her after-school activities and made sure she was fed and bathed and tucked into bed.

Later, when I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder, I was given a list of common symptoms. None resonated more than this one: increased sex drive. Not only that, but a tendency toward risky sexual behavior with potentially dire consequences.



I had started expanding the range of things I was willing to do with clients, but when pushing the sex boundary lost its thrill, I occasionally told them who I was. I loved seeing how excited they got when they learned I was a famous Olympian. I didn't think it was risky. We had a special bond. None of them would betray me. I was sure of it.

*In December 2012 the website The Smoking Gun ran a story providing evidence that Kelly was Suzy Favor Hamilton. The next month Suzy was finally diagnosed with bipolar disorder.*

### **IT IS A CRISP FALL MORNING.**

I've dropped Kylie off at school. I look forward to this time, when I can move in the way my body knows best, wind in my hair, finding the rhythm that feels as natural as breathing. I am constantly in motion: running, on my bike, on my yoga mat. At those times I am myself, living the life I want, not the one that others expect from me or the one that I created out of fantasy. It isn't perfect, but it's a life of contentment, and for this I am incredibly grateful.

I am grateful for the little moments, such as walking my daughter to school, sharing a family meal, dancing to our favorite songs while we bake chocolate chip cookies. I am grateful that the love of my life stood by me through the destruction that was my illness. The year that followed my diagnosis was actually the most challenging of all. It took months to find the right dosage of Lamictal, the drug that finally quieted my mind. With the help of a skilled mental health team, I identified the triggers that set me off: my job, my family, certain aspects of my marriage. We cleaned up the wreckage I had created and paid the taxes I owed for my escorting.

As I run, I feel my muscles loosen. It was running that made me a role model, even though I had little desire for that burden. I came to hate the thing I loved most. But now I have a new purpose. I want to share my story. I want to have the courage to keep fighting. I want to show others, especially my daughter, that you have to live for yourself, and that with love and help you can claw your way back from a dark place. □

## LEGAL NOTICE

**If You Purchased a Product That Contains Flexible Polyurethane Foam,  
Such as a Mattress, a Couch, or Carpet Underlay,  
You Could Be Eligible to Receive Money  
by Participating in Nine Proposed Class Action Settlements Valued at  
\$151,250,000.**

**TO DETERMINE IF YOU ARE ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE MONEY, READ BELOW.**

**YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS ARE AFFECTED.**

**PLEASE READ THIS NOTICE CAREFULLY.**

**To File a Claim, Visit [www.PolyFoamClassAction.com](http://www.PolyFoamClassAction.com)**

*Para una notificación en español, llamar o visitar nuestro website.*

### **Who is paying the settlement money?**

A lawsuit known as *In re Polyurethane Foam Antitrust Litigation*, Case No. 10-MD-2196, is pending in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio in Toledo. The Court previously approved Settlements with two Defendants in the lawsuit: Valle Foam Industries, Inc. and Domfoam International, Inc.

Additional Settlements have now been reached with the following Defendants: (1) Carpenter Co., (2) FFP Holdings LLC, (3) Future Foam, Inc., (4) FXI Holdings, Inc., (5) Hickory Springs Manufacturing Company, (6) Leggett & Platt, Incorporated, (7) Mohawk Industries, Inc., (8) Vitafoam (Vitafoam Products Canada Limited, and Vitafoam, Inc.), and (9) Woodbridge (Woodbridge Foam Corporation, Woodbridge Sales & Engineering, Inc., and Woodbridge Foam Fabricating, Inc.). Together, these "Additional Settling Defendants" will be paying a total of \$151,250,000 into the Settlement Fund. There are no other Defendants that have not settled.

### **What is the lawsuit about?**

Several individuals and businesses ("Plaintiffs") brought claims on behalf of a Class of end-user "indirect" purchasers of products that contain flexible polyurethane foam manufactured or supplied by the Defendants. These products include bedding (for example, mattresses, mattress toppers, or pillows) carpet underlay (also called carpet padding or carpet cushion), and upholstered furniture (for example, a sofa with foam cushions).

Plaintiffs claim Defendants engaged in a conspiracy to: (i) increase prices of flexible polyurethane foam and (ii) not compete for, or "allocate," customers. Plaintiffs contend Defendants violated numerous States' antitrust and consumer protection laws. Defendants deny these claims and deny they are liable to Plaintiffs in any way. The Court has not decided who is right.

### **Who is included in the lawsuit?**

**YOU** are included in the lawsuit and may be entitled to money **IF:**

1. You purchased one or more of the following products containing flexible polyurethane foam that was manufactured in the United States: upholstered furniture (such as a couch with foam cushions), carpet underlay (foam padding), or bedding products (such as a foam mattress or pillow), *and*
2. You are the end-user of the product that you purchased, meaning you did not buy it for resale to someone else, *and*
3. You made your purchase in AL, AZ, CA, CO, DC, FL, HI, IL, IA, KS, ME, MA, MI, MN, MS, MO, NE, NV, NH, NM, NY, NC, ND, OR, RI, SD, TN, VT, WV, or WI, *and*
4. You made your purchase during the time period January 1, 1999 to August 1, 2015.

### **What do the Settlements provide?**

Defendants in the nine Settlements will pay a total of \$151,250,000. If the Plan of Allocation is approved by the Court, payments will be made to each Claimant from each Settlement *pro rata* based on the number of valid claims filed and the amounts paid for qualifying products. You can obtain more details about the Plan of Allocation at [www.PolyFoamClassAction.com](http://www.PolyFoamClassAction.com), or by calling 1-866-302-7323.

The Settlement Fund may also be used to pay for: (1) the cost to administer the Settlements, (2) attorneys' fees, costs, and expenses, and (3) awards to Class Representative Plaintiffs. Plaintiffs' counsel will request attorneys' fees not to exceed thirty percent (30%) of \$151,250,000, plus reimbursement of costs and expenses. The Court will then decide a reasonable fee and expense award.

### **How can I get a payment?**

You must submit a Claim Form to get a payment. You can submit a claim online or by mail. The deadline to submit a claim is **FEBRUARY 29, 2016**. Claim Forms are available at [www.PolyFoamClassAction.com](http://www.PolyFoamClassAction.com), or by calling 1-866-302-7323.

### **Who represents you?**

The Court has appointed Marvin A. Miller of Miller Law LLC to represent the Plaintiff Class.

### **What are your options?**

**1. Participate.** If you made purchases that include you in this lawsuit and you do *not* timely request to be excluded from the Settlements, then you will automatically be bound by the terms of the Settlements. You will also be legally bound by all orders and judgments of the Court. You will not be able to sue the Additional Settling Defendants in any other lawsuit for conspiring to fix prices or allocate customers of flexible polyurethane foam. In order to get a payment from the Settlement Fund, you must submit a Claim Form.

**2. Don't Participate.** If you do not want to be a part of one or more of the nine Settlements, you may request to be excluded. If you are excluded from a Settlement, you will not be bound by or benefit from that Settlement, or any other Court orders relating to that Settlement, but you will keep your right to sue or resolve your claims on your own against that Additional Settling Defendant. To see the requirements for submitting a valid request to exclude, visit [www.PolyFoamClassAction.com](http://www.PolyFoamClassAction.com), or call 1-866-302-7323. **Requests to exclude must be in writing and received by NOVEMBER 25, 2015.**

### **Court Hearing**

The Court will hold a hearing to decide whether to approve the nine proposed Settlements. The hearing will be on **DECEMBER 15, 2015, at 10:00 a.m.** at the Ashley U.S. Courthouse, 1716 Spielbusch Avenue, Toledo, Ohio 43604. The Court may change the date, time, or location of the hearing. To obtain the most up-to-date information regarding the hearing date and location, please visit [www.PolyFoamClassAction.com](http://www.PolyFoamClassAction.com), or call 1-866-302-7323.

If you choose to participate in one or more of the Settlements, **you may object to or comment on those Settlements in writing by NOVEMBER 13, 2015.** You or your own lawyer may appear and speak at the hearing at your own expense. To see the requirements for filing an Objection, visit [www.PolyFoamClassAction.com](http://www.PolyFoamClassAction.com), or call 1-866-302-7323.

### **Do you have questions?**

If you have questions, want more details, or want to see other documents describing this lawsuit and your rights, visit [www.PolyFoamClassAction.com](http://www.PolyFoamClassAction.com), or call 1-866-302-7323.

*Para una notificación en Español, llamar o visitar nuestro website.*

**PLEASE DO NOT CONTACT DEFENDANTS OR THE COURT FOR INFORMATION REGARDING THIS LAWSUIT OR THE SETTLEMENTS.**



# Tommy's Boys

→ BY GREG A. BEDARD

An open lett-ah to the other 31 National Football League lose-ahs:

The inhabitants of these six New England states wish to thank you. After winning our fourth Super Bowl title in the past 14 years under the greatest coach ev-ah, William Stephen Belichick, we were a little worried about how we were going to get up for (yawn) another championship run. After this Deflategate nonsense, Bob Kraft has already measured Belichick's thumb because, come February, he's going to be completing that ring set with number 5. *Maahk it down.*

Seriously, do you understand the hell you've unleashed? You remember that overblown "scandal" Spygate? In response, the 2007 Patriots went 16–0 and beat everybody, like, 43–13. This year, teams should feel lucky to lose by 30. Take the Patriots and give the points in every game. In fact, we'll give you *double* the points.

Belichick, the genius who is five steps in front of the rest of the league, saw all of this coming. You think we're lacking talent in the secondary after we didn't bring back Dah-relle Revis and Brandon Brown-ah? Belichick didn't re-sign them because he knew we weren't going to need them. We're going to score so many points, we might not even field a defense this year.

During Spygate, all of you so-ah lose-ahs went after Belichick and questioned how legit our three Super Bowl titles were. Belichick's probably doing worse things (we don't care #KissTheRings), and those Lombardi trophies aren't going anywhere.

This time, you went after Thomas Edward Patrick Brady Jr., aka the GOAT. Nobody questions our Tommy. O.K., so we feel an irrational personal connection to someone who throws a football for a living and doesn't really care about us, but what do you want? The winters suck up here.

Who the heck did you think you were messing with? They don't call us the Hub of the Universe for nothing. If it wasn't for us, the only football we'd have in this country would be soccer. In a way, we invented America, so I guess you could say we invented American football. And then Bill and Tommy perfected it. You're welcome.

Did Rog-ah Goodell really think he was going to beat the

Get ready  
for the  
scorched-  
earth  
Patriots  
2015 season,  
with  
something  
extra  
special  
reserved  
for those  
crybaby  
Colts,  
who started  
this mess.



Will the  
Patriots win  
the Super  
Bowl?

Join the  
discussion on  
Twitter by  
using

#SIPointAfter  
and following  
@GregABedard

greatest winner ev-ah? Tommy wins on the field and off (Gisele, boom), and he probably wins on the way home in a quick game of Keno. With us working at home to enlighten the ignorant about the ESPN-NFL leak factory and the Ideal Gas Law and exposing scorned frauds like the NFL's VP of game operations Mike Kensil (he worked for the Jets, duh), Colts general manager Ryan Grigson (we've beaten Indy by an average of 29 points since quarterback Andrew Luck arrived in 2012) and NFL executive vice president Troy Vincent (hates us from his days with the Dolphins and Bills), doubters never stood a chance. We'll never get back those months of our lives we spent thinking and talking about stuff that would have zero impact on the decision of the Most Honorable Judge Richard Berman. But that Gronk-spike we dropped on all your ignorant heads was as sweet as any Lombardi Trophy.

We understand what went on here. We know that to keep the illusion of parity in the league, you need to dock us a first-round draft pick every eight years. That doesn't mean we have to like it, and you'll now see the result. Get ready for the scorched-earth Patriots' 2015 season, with something extra special reserved for those crybaby Colts, who started this whole mess by whining about ball inflation. Tommy could have picked apart your pathetic secondary throwing an underinflated beach ball.

Colts, we'll tattoo you on Oct. 18. The rest of the NFL, if we don't play and beat you this season, you can watch us hoist another trophy on Feb. 7, 2016. It's the 50th Super Bowl, and it's being held outside San Francisco, down the road from where Tommy grew up. You have no idea what you've done. This season will be wicked pissah.

Sincerely,  
Pats Nation



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